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THE WORLD'S BEST ONE HUNDRED DETECTIVE STORIES

(IN TEN VOLUMES)

EUGENE THWING

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

VOLUME FIVE

FUNK & WAGNALLS COMPANY

NEW YORK AND LONDON

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THE WORLD'S BEST 100 DETECTIVE STORIES

R. T. M. SCOTT

UNDERGROUND

PHILIP COURVELLE, shrewd managing editor of a great New York newspaper, tapped nervously with an ink-stained finger upon the large table which separated him from Aurelius Smith. It was in the workroom of the criminal investigator that the meeting took place and the twilight of a winter afternoon was descending as a huge Hindu servant placed a tray of tea and toast between the two men before padding back to his kitchenette on bare and almost noiseless feet.

"I dropped in for a bit of a chat," said Courvelle, "on my way to the office."

"On the contrary," returned Smith, "you came straight from your office and you came in a great hurry."

"Yes," said the editor, in no way embarrassed, "you are right. How did you know?"

"On your way *to* the office," explained Smith, "your hands would be clean but, if you left the office in a great hurry, you might fail to wash the ink stains from your fingers."

Courvelle glanced at his fingers with a faint smile and accepted a cup from the lanky man whose long fingers manipulated the tea things with a precision which is usually reserved for the utensils of the laboratory.

(From "Aurelius Smith, Detective," by R. T. M. Scott. Copyright, 1927, by E. P. Dutton & Company, New York, and by William Heinemann, London, England.)

"There is an unusual piece of 'underground' news in the newspaper world," said Courvelle.

"You mean the kind of news which cannot be printed because it cannot be proved or because it would be too harmful if given to the public?" asked Smith.

"Exactly," was the terse reply.

"And what particular 'underground' news is worrying you?"

"Yes, it is worrying me," admitted the editor. "The news is to the effect that Richard Harrington, considered one of the richest and most honorable men in the world, is under arrest for murder."

"Not likely to be true," commented Smith.

"On the contrary, it is true," returned Courvelle with a break in his voice.

"That proves Harrington to be innocent."

"Why do you say that?"

"Because," returned Smith, "a man with so much money would have to be honest to *allow* himself to be put under arrest."

Courvelle suddenly set down his cup with a little crash and commenced speaking with a suppressed emotion which is seldom evinced by a New York man of large affairs.

"I know that Harrington is innocent," he said. "He could not be otherwise. Years ago, when he bought my paper, he made me what I am and I know him intimately. There is no more honorable man alive; yet, an hour ago he came to my office, while a secret service man stood outside the door, and told me that he was under arrest for murder and that the story would be given to the press tonight at midnight if—if nothing new was discovered before that hour.

"The story is now being written by the city editor himself and is to be set up in type at midnight. At the same moment Mr. Harrington will be publicly arrested and locked up. He will refuse to offer bail, even if it could be accepted, and the blow will smash the last years of his life—no matter what the verdict. Stop this story from

going to press, Mr. Smith, and you will place me under an obligation which I can never repay. I come to you as a friend and I can place unlimited money at your command."

Aurelius Smith glanced at his watch.

"There is no time to lose," he said. "State the facts as quickly and briefly as possible."

"Three months ago," commenced Courvelle, speaking rapidly but carefully, "Harrington, having recovered from a serious illness, visited his office, in the Majestic Building, at night to catch up with back work. He left at ten o'clock, approximately, and walked alone from his office on the ground floor to his car at the curb.

"On the following morning Magnus Jansen, a financial enemy of Harrington's, was found murdered in his office just across the hall from the office which my friend had left on the previous night. Beside the dead man was found an automatic pistol bearing the finger-prints of Richard Harrington.

"So honorable has been Harrington's name that no suspicion fell upon him until a month ago when an anonymous letter reached the police stating that Harrington's finger-prints were upon the pistol. The Commissioner of Police, himself, went to Mr. Harrington and, to the astonishment of both, it was discovered that the prints on the pistol actually were from the fingers of Mr. Harrington. At his own suggestion Harrington, although secretly watched, has been given two months in which to solve the mystery. Today, almost broken in spirit, he is helplessly waiting for midnight, surrounded, perhaps, for the last time by his family."

"Can you get hold of an accurate reporter with police knowledge?" asked Smith, pointing to his telephone.

"Every experienced reporter on the paper is sitting within sound of my telephone," returned Courvelle. "The greenest cubs are going out on the biggest assignments."

"Good!" ejaculated Smith. "Send your best man to Police Headquarters and instruct him to write a minute description of the pistol which did the killing."

While Courvelle was telephoning Smith pressed two buttons underneath his table. Almost at once the native servant and a remarkably pretty woman entered the room.

"Up to midnight you will both remain prepared for anything," directed Smith. "Langa Doonh, you will change to American clothing."

Both persons summoned turned to depart without a word but Smith stopped the Hindu with a gesture as Courvelle set down the telephone.

"What kind of a pistol did the killing?" he asked the editor.

"I believe it was a .45 Colt automatic," replied Courvelle.

Again Smith made a gesture and the native, quick to read his master's mind, extracted a weapon of that description from a cabinet and started to load it.

"Unloaded!" interposed Smith. "Won't use it. Hat and coat. Put the gun in coat pocket." Then to Courvelle: "We will drive straight to Harrington's house. You must stay with me till the job is finished or—till midnight. I may have to use every sleuth on your paper and I want your voice, over the telephone, to drive them."

Half an hour later, Aurelius Smith and Philip Courvelle were ushered into the huge library of Richard Harrington's city residence. Two arm-chairs, close together, were drawn before an open wood fire and in the chairs sat the man of wealth and his wife. Beside them was a small table of untouched food. The old people were gazing silently into the fire as the visitors entered and a younger man was striding savagely about the room.

During the brief introduction, and for a full minute afterward, the tall detective leaned against the mantelpiece and inquiringly, but without offence, regarded the two people who were facing so much trouble. It was evident that both had about given up and that each was worrying about the other.

"I am afraid that you have come too late, Mr. Smith," said the old man in a low voice which still held an out-

ward strength. "I have just telephoned the paper to run the story in the first night edition. I want the suspense ended."

"Will you give me full command until midnight?" asked Smith.

Strangely enough it was Mrs. Harrington who replied.

"Yes," she said very simply and, rising from her chair, took one of the tall man's hands in both of hers. "If you help him I will always be your friend and—and you will have done a great thing."

The two looked at each other almost as mother and son and a surprising softness stole into the keen features of the man.

"Since I am to be in command," he said, leading the old lady back to her chair, "you will both eat, at least a little."

Picking up a telephone from a table Smith handed it to Courvelle.

"Cancel that order to run the story before midnight," he said briefly.

Richard Harrington raised a hand in protest but Mrs. Harrington seized and held it prisoner while Smith turned to the excited man who was still striding about the room with drawn features.

"You are Richard Harrington, Junior?"

"Yes."

"Then sit down and keep quiet till I need you."

The man came to a surprised halt, hesitated and sat down.

An exclamation came from Courvelle at the telephone.

"Two rival papers have the story in their morning editions which will be on sale before midnight," he said.

"How did they get enough confirmation to publish it?" demanded Smith.

"My office doesn't know," returned Courvelle with the telephone in his hand.

"Send out a good reporter to discover their source of information," directed Smith with quick decision and was turning to Mr. Harrington when a servant ushered in

Montgomery Renfrew, Commissioner of Police, and a Mr. Melville, who proved to be the reporter whom Courvelle had sent for a description of the pistol.

"I came to see if I could be of any assistance," said the Commissioner to Mr. Harrington.

"Mr. Renfrew," interrupted Smith, "Mrs. Harrington has placed everything in my hands until midnight. You can be of immense assistance if you will remain."

Renfrew smiled a recognition to Smith, bowed to Mrs. Harrington and sat down. As he did so Smith took a large envelope from Melville, the reporter, and extracted several pages of typewriting and some photographs of the pistol and the finger-prints.

"By Jove!" he exclaimed, as he ran his eye over the material. "You have made a good job of this. How did you get the photographs from the police?"

"Stole 'em," was the laconic reply.

For an instant Smith hesitated. Trained investigator, as he was, some hidden faculty fluttered around a faint sense. The next minute he was closely scrutinizing the photographs and comparing the photograph of the pistol with the pistol which he had brought. Finally he tossed photographs and pistol on the table beside the telephone and devoted himself to a careful but rapid reading of the typewritten report.

"These are all actual facts?" asked Smith.

"I'll back every sentence to the limit," replied the reporter.

"Anything unusual in the way of unreliable information about the pistol, Mr. Melville?"

"Well," returned the reporter, "a young newspaper man from Brooklyn got off a funny one at the time that the pistol was found. He said it smelled funny but couldn't think what it smelled like."

"Better get back to the paper," said Courvelle to his reporter as Smith turned toward the group at the fire.

"No," interposed Smith over his shoulder. "Let him stay. The story will have to be written again and he might

as well do it since he is one of the best reporters I have met."

"Then, you have discovered something!" exclaimed Mrs. Harrington.

"A great deal," returned Smith, and Courvelle dropped one of the photographs in amazement.

"What could you possibly have discovered that is not known?" demanded the Commissioner of Police in surprise.

"Well," returned Smith, "I'll tell you during the evening but I must work roughly and very fast. Now, Mr. Harrington, I shall make a few statements. Correct me if you disagree."

The old man bowed his head slightly and continued to gaze into the fire.

"In the first place the prints on the gun came from your fingers," continued Smith. "That must have been proved beyond doubt. They were not made at the time of the killing or you would have known it. They were not made afterward because you did not return to the building where the murder took place until after the pistol was found. Consequently, they were made before the murder. When did you last handle any pistol?"

"Not for years," answered Harrington.

"The evidence shows," went on Smith, glancing swiftly at Melville's typewriten statement, "that the pistol was sold six months before the murder. It was sold to a second hand dealer who claims that it was stolen from him. Some time, during the three months previous to the murder, your hand gripped the pistol *when you did not know it.*"

"Mr. Smith," broke in the Commissioner of Police, "you cannot possibly solve this thing tonight. Much as I regret it, those finger-prints *must* go before a jury."

"And be laughed out of court within five minutes," retorted Smith, wheeling upon the speaker.

There was a general gasp of astonishment.

"Please do not interrupt me again," continued Smith. "Our next objective is to discover when you, Mr. Har-

rington, could have made the finger-prints unconsciously. Are you a light sleeper?"

"A very light sleeper," returned Mr. Harrington, leaning forward with a new interest. "The slightest sound or touch wakens me—especially since I have been having nightmares."

"What kind of nightmares?" was the rather unexpected question of the investigator.

"Just the lower part of a face," returned the old man. "There is a thick lower lip and two protruding upper teeth. It appears in my dreams and causes me to wake at once. Surely it can have nothing to do with the present case."

"When did it first occur?"

"When I was ill."

Aurelius Smith picked a small sandwich from the table and bit into it with an expression upon his face that indicated concentration upon something far away.

"My husband took sleeping-medicine nearly every night when he was ill," broke in Mrs. Harrington.

"The mind, guided by the heart, is a wonderful thing," said Smith, looking at Mrs. Harrington. "You got a trifle ahead of me in my reasoning. Who was the doctor?"

Mr. Harrington named him.

"Beyond suspicion," commented Smith. "And the night nurse?"

"Julia Canfield," said Mrs. Harrington, rising. "I'll get you her address."

Smith crossed the room rapidly and whispered something to her at the door. She nodded her head gravely and left the room.

"Now, Mr. Melville," continued Smith, addressing the reporter as he walked back to the fire, "I want that Brooklyn reporter who smelled something funny on the gun. Do you think you could get him to come here?"

"No newspaper man would refuse a call to this house," answered Melville, reaching for the telephone.

Mrs. Harrington returned with an open address book and a small parcel. Smith took both and placed the parcel

upon the mantelpiece. Address book in hand he took up the telephone as Melville put it down.

"Miss Asterley," he said as soon as the connection was made, "you are to go out on special assignment. Langa Doonh stays at home for further orders. Take dictation. Investigate Julia Canfield, trained nurse, at 621 West Nth Street. Report at Harrington residence from time to time or within an hour if possible. She was night nurse during Mr. Harrington's late illness. Supposition is that she aided in placing Mr. Harrington's finger-prints on gun which killed Magnus Jansen. Get a line on her character and anything else of value. Go the limit as you will be well backed up in case of trouble. Any questions? Right."

Aurelius Smith crossed again to the fireplace where he stood for a moment, watch in hand, before an audience that waited in suspense for his next move.

"It is seven o'clock," he said, "and we have not touched on motive. Have you any enemies, Mr. Harrington?"

"None," was the reply, "except business rivals."

"What about Magnus Jansen?" was the next question to the Commissioner of Police. "Had the murdered man any enemies, Mr. Renfrew?"

"None that would account for the crime," answered the Commissioner. "The motive for the killing has been put down to the hatred of a crank or cranks for those who are rich."

"The same motive would cause hatred toward both Magnus Jansen and Mr. Harrington," commented Smith. "Hatred for the rich! Diseased minds and distorted vision. One might as well hate the sun because some people are sun-struck."

Smith glanced at the small package on the mantelpiece, looked at Mrs. Harrington and strolled over to Harrington junior.

"In order to be on the safe side I might as well examine the servants," he said to that individual. "Will you be good enough to have them assembled in the hall where I may look at them in a strong light?"

Fifteen minutes later the telephone bell sounded just as Smith returned from his inspection. So much had the detective assumed control that no person moved to answer the call and Smith took up the instrument himself.

"Uh-huh," he drawled and set it down again after the briefest interval of listening.

"My assistant, Miss Asterley," he explained, "is at a public telephone opposite Julia Canfield's boarding house. She is about to enter the place."

At a quarter to eight Courvelle was called to the telephone and held a short conversation with his office.

"After much difficulty," he told Smith, "we have discovered that the rival newspapers got confirmation of Mr. Harrington's arrest, in strict confidence, from a clerk in the finger-print department of Police Headquarters. The name of the clerk is Rance."

Renfrew, the Commissioner, grunted in surprise and Smith turned sharply to Melville, the reporter.

"And you stole the finger-print photographs from whom?" he demanded.

"Rance," answered Melville.

"I thought it was strange that you could steal so easily from the police," commented Smith.

"Yes, I see light," returned Melville dryly. "He wanted me to pinch 'em."

"Exactly," said Smith. "Rance is interested in the downfall of Mr. Harrington. Inch by inch we are making progress."

At eight o'clock the Brooklyn reporter arrived and was brought into the library at Smith's request. Asked if he could remember the peculiar smell which he had noticed on the gun he thought that he could.

"Smell that," said Smith, extending the small parcel which he had taken from the mantelpiece.

"That's it!" exclaimed the Brooklyn man. "The odor is faint but familiar and yet I can't give it a name. What is it?"

Smith took off the wrapping paper and exposed a small roll of absorbent cotton.

"It was a trace of the familiar sick-room smell which this man noticed," said Smith. "Confirmation lies in the evidence where it states"—referring to Melville's notes—"that a minute particle of cotton adhered to the trigger guard. All this points to the possibility of the finger-prints having been obtained from Mr. Harrington while he was ill and under the influence of sleeping medicine. If this proves true it is just possible that the pistol was actually wrapped in absorbent cotton to protect the finger-prints."

"Mr. Smith," said the Commissioner of Police, "you are probing this case with curious adroitness and your argument about the finger-prints has greatly improved Mr. Harrington's position. Nevertheless, I cannot see how the case can be kept from the jury unless you actually produce the murderer."

"Mr. Renfrew," replied Smith, "I may even do that if I am allowed to work up to the last minute. I am attempting to do, in one evening, what your entire force has been working on for two months. If I succeed you will call it luck and—perhaps you will be right."

Smith turned next to Harrington junior.

"Show me over the house," he said. And to the Brooklyn reporter: "I wish you would stay. A good newspaper man is always useful."

At half-past nine Miss Asterley flung a few rapid words to her chief over the telephone. She was at the Grand Central Station and was coming by taxi to report in person. Julia Canfield, the trained nurse, had just left for Chicago.

At ten o'clock the curtains parted and Bernice Asterley entered the room with rapid steps ahead of the servant who was conducting her. Flushed, pretty and vibrant with energy she halted in the middle of the room, waiting for Smith, who had risen as she entered.

"Just tell us what happened," he said. "Contrary to my usual method I am conducting this case quite openly."

"Julia Canfield," commenced Miss Asterley, speaking rapidly but very distinctly, "lives in a respectable board-

ing house. I entered and applied for a room. Discovered the Canfield door. Leaned against it and fainted, falling inside the room. Canfield revived me with smelling salts. Her character is good except that she would do anything for the man she loved. How do I know? I just know. She was in trouble and packing a bag to catch the Chicago train. She is afraid of the police. Told her an officer on front steps recommended the house and she showed alarm. Had just received a letter which caused her to take the Chicago train. Stole the letter. Followed her in second taxi to station. Saw her through the gates. She spoke to nobody. Letter is her last contact with friends in city. Here it is."

Smith took the letter and, after a quick scanning, read aloud:

"Dearest Girl,

"If you love me do as I advised and get out of town before midnight. I inclose money for your expenses. Whatever you do don't use the Spring telephone again. If anything happens call Barside 3249. If all goes well I will join you in Chicago in a week and we will be married at once. With love and kisses, Benny."

Smith motioned Miss Asterley into a chair and stood, scrutinizing the letter.

"'Don't use the Spring telephone again,'" he quoted. "Another faint indication in the direction of the police. Spring is the telephone exchange of Police Headquarters. Barside 3249 is a different matter. Please get the address of that telephone from your paper, Mr. Melville. Your office must have addresses of all telephones."

The telephone address proved to be that of a small boarding house near Riverside Drive. Aurelius Smith threw himself into a chair, sprawled his long legs outward and stared moodily at the ceiling. Finally he turned to Harrington junior and asked a surprising question.

"Do you mind getting killed for the sake of your father?"

"Try me!" exclaimed that man, leaping out of his chair ss if he, himself, were going to do the killing.

"Good!" ejaculated Smith. "You are not likely to be illed but go to my place at 126 Fenton Street and do xactly what Langa Doonh, my Hindu servant, tells you o do. Motor to Fenton Street but leave your car with a ood driver at some distance from my door. Are you ame?"

"Absolutely!" returned Harrington junior, and strode om the room in a way that boded ill for somebody.

"Just a minute," called Smith, picking up his pistol om the table. "Give this to Langa Doonh as a means identification. Otherwise it is just possible that he might e rather rough."

Harrington took the pistol at the door and Smith walked ack to the telephone and called his own number.

"Langa Doonh," he said, "I have work for you and m sending Harrington sahib to help you. He is a great hib and a brave man but he will do what you say ecause you know best how these things are done. Some me, after Harrington sahib arrives, a very bad man—erhaps more than one—will break into house like thief in ight. Catch all the bad men who come and bring them ere in Harrington sahib's car. Telephone me when Harngton sahib arrives and you are ready. Harrington sahib ill give you my gun so you will know him."

Amid general amazement Smith hung up the receiver nd, taking a rather large knife from his pocket, walked lently out of the room. He returned in a few minutes ith a telephone receiver and several feet of dangling cord hich he had evidently cut from some telephone in anther part of the house. It was the matter of a few mintes only for him to slit the cord of the library telephone nd to connect the second receiver so that the instrument as converted into one with two ear pieces.

"Speak like Julia Canfield," he unexpectedly said to Iiss Asterley.

"Why, Mr. Smith, how can you ask such a thing?" reorted that young lady in a low and undulating voice

that was totally unlike her own. "You know that I couldn't possibly go to Chicago tonight."

"Mercy!" exclaimed Mrs. Harrington. "That was exactly like the voice of Julia Canfield."

"Now," said Smith to Miss Asterley, "we will try to decoy this man, Benny, by means of the telephone. You will play the part of Julia Canfield. On the way to the train you were caught by a private detective and taken to his place at 126 Fenton Street. You refuse to answer questions about Mr. Harrington. The detective goes to Brooklyn to get a hypnotist to force you to talk by means of hypnotism. You are guarded by one man who leaves the room. You grab the telephone and call Benny for help. You just have time to tell him where you are and to explain a little when the man returns to the room and drags you away. I will play the part of your guard. Think it over while we wait."

At half-past ten Langa Doonh telephoned that all was in readiness and Smith pushed two chairs close together beside the telephone. He picked up the instrument and seated himself while Miss Asterley took the other chair. Her face tensed and then relaxed. For a minute there was silence.

"Ready," she said, holding out her hand.

Smith passed over the telephone and placed his improvised receiver to his ear. Again the girl hesitated before tossing her head slightly and snapping her receiver from its hook.

"Barside 3249," came in her natural tones with the clearest possible enunciation.

Immediately she squirmed downward into her chair while her breathing became rapid and labored.

"Benny, Benny, Benny," she began murmuring in the low, drooping voice of the nurse so that the fear anxiety of her tones vibrated throughout the room. "Benny, Benny, Benny. . . . Yes, yes! Get him quick, please! . . . Benny, they caught me. No, no! Not the police. A detective—on the way to the train. I'm at 126 Fenton Street. . . . Yes, one-twenty-six. Benny, help me. They

re trying to make me talk about Harrington. The detec-
ve has gone to Brooklyn to get a hypnotist to force me
o answer questions. There is only one man here—in
ext room. Oh, Benny, I'm frightened. I—"

"I caught you just in time," broke in Smith in a rough
oice.

He rose from his chair, tipping it over with a crash,
hile a half-choked scream burst from the lips of Miss
sterley. The next instant he placed his own receiver on
e hook, breaking the connection, and set the instrument
arelessly upon the library table.

"Excellent, Miss Asterley," he commented, gazing at the
artled group who had risen to their feet upon hearing
e unexpected scream.

"Never before have I witnessed such a remarkable in-
estigation," volunteered the Commissioner during the
ait which followed.

The keen interest of the assembled party turned to the
reatest suspense when Harrington junior telephoned at
leven o'clock that they were just starting with two
risoners.

Smith's next act was even more unexpected than any-
ing he had yet done. He called for a sofa and had it
laced at one side of the room. Around the sofa he ar-
nged a screen. In front of the screen he set a small
ble and chair.

"Miss Asterley," he said, "you will continue to be Julia
anfield. You will lie on the sofa, concealed by the screen,
nd you will pretend to be in a hypnotic sleep. If I ques-
on you I shall use ventriloquism and you will use your
its in replying. Remember that ventriloquism is merely
e imitation of a distant sound. To those who see me
y voice will *appear* to come from behind the screen but,
nce you actually *are* behind it the effect will not be
e same to you. Oh, Mr. Melville," to the New York
porter, "will you kindly sit on the sofa beside Miss
sterley? If I make use of this plan be good enough to
ow the top of your head occasionally above the screen.
ou will play the hypnotist, but do not speak a word."

Smith turned to the small table in front of the screen.

"And if the newspaper man from Brooklyn will sit here," he said. "I should be glad to have him impersonate an official stenographer."

Into this scene, at half-past eleven, walked four men very close together and the reason for the closeness was emphatic although not easily observed. From a block, in Langa Doonh's left hand, ran a fine wire to the little finger of the large and powerful captive next to him. The same kind of fine wire bound the little finger, on the big man's other side, to the little finger of his adjacent fellow prisoner. Like Langa Doonh, Harrington junior held a block which was securely wired to the remaining little finger of the prisoner on his side. The novel arrangement permitted the administration of agonizing pain in the event of the slightest resistance. The larger captive was defiant in appearance but the smaller one was plainly frightened.

"Sahib, bad men here," announced Langa Doonh in matter of fact tones.

Smith strode quickly forward and confronted the two prisoners, staring full into their faces. The heavy, lower lip of the big man drooped and two large upper teeth protruded in a menacing expression. Swiftly Smith covered the upper part of the man's face with his hand.

"The face in my dream!" exclaimed Harrington senior, rising from his chair in excitement.

"Good! We are nearing the end," said Smith and slipped a hand into the smaller man's breast pocket, extracting an envelope.

"So!" he continued, looking at the smaller man after glancing at the address upon the envelope. "You are Benny—Benny Rance of the finger-print department of Headquarters. Well, Benny, you seem to be in bad company."

There was no reply.

"Cut them apart," snapped Smith.

Langa Doonh knelt with a file almost as the words were

ttered and did not hesitate to remove considerable skin performing the operation.

"Which of you will save himself by confessing?" de-anded Smith as the two men separated a little.

There followed a silence in which Rance glanced fear-lly at his larger companion.

Suddenly Smith pointed dramatically at the screen.

"Professor!" he called. "Force the truth from Miss nfield by hypnotism."

Benny Rance started at the name of Canfield but Smith, ised and pointing toward the screen, paid no atten-on. With lips slightly parted, but perfectly motionless, appeared to be waiting expectantly.

Abruptly, from behind the screen, appeared to come the othing and monotonous utterance of a new voice.

"Sleep, sleep, Julia Canfield," it said. "Sleep, sleep more eply. You will obey me and answer my questions when ask them."

"Take down every word carefully," broke in Smith's tural voice to the stenographer at the small table.

"Now you will answer the first question," continued the othing voice. "Who is Benny? You will answer, answer, swer."

A low, feminine moan sounded from the screen, caus-; several of the listeners to shift nervously.

"Who is Benny?" persisted the monotonous voice. "You ust tell me. Do it! Do it! Do it!"

"Benny?" came a limpid voice that must have resembled ry closely the voice of the real Julia. "Benny Rance! ., I love—him—but—he—is—in trouble."

There was an interruption as Rance sank to the floor a weeping state. The Julia voice continued to repeat name of Benny tremblingly.

"Go ahead, Professor," rapped out Smith in his natural ice, "even if it endangers her life."

"You will tell me more," went on the voice of the pposed hypnotist, still monotonous but stronger. leep still more deeply first—more deeply, more eply."

The Julia voice issued forth again in a moan that was truly agonizing.

"Stop! Stop!" screamed Rance, from the floor. "I confess! This man, this beast, made me force Julia to let him get the finger-prints on the gun while Mr. Harrington was unconscious. It's all my fault. I made her let him in at night but she didn't know what he was doing. He got me in his power and I was afraid. He is a Red, a Red and he killed Magnus Jansen with another gun and left the prepared pistol as evidence to convict Mr. Harrington."

With a bound the big captive leaped forward and there was a writhing heap of Hindu and white man upon the floor until Smith and the Commissioner of Police jerked them apart and a pair of handcuffs were snapped upon the murderer.

"Most extraordinary case I ever witnessed," gasped the Commissioner, straightening up. "There is just one more thing I would like to know. Why in the name of common sense, Mr. Smith, did you say that those finger-prints would be laughed out of court? Will you explain?"

"Uh-huh," said Smith. "They were perfect prints—without the slightest slip or blur. A .45 Colt kicks like a small cannon and the hand that fired it could not possibly have made perfect finger-prints."

It was just midnight as Aurelius Smith, between Miss Asterley and Langa Doonh, stood for a moment at the door before departing. Philip Courvelle held the telephone.

"Clear a wire to the linotype room," he was saying. "Kill the old story and Mr. Melville will dictate the new one straight into type."

R. T. M. SCOTT

MYSTERY MOUNTAIN

THE grizzled head of the Criminal Intelligence Department of India gazed in amazement at the tall, lanky man seated opposite. The summer sun struck down on baking Calcutta, and even the waving *punkahs* could not keep the perspiration from the forehead of the old Anglo Indian official.

"Smith," he exclaimed, "never before have you said that you wouldn't take a case!"

"No," said Smith, his voice very earnest but his body the picture of sprawling indolence, "I didn't say I wouldn't take it. I said that I didn't want to take it."

"But why?" demanded the older man. "I do not believe that you have ever failed. You seem to have a secret that nobody knows. And now, when the life of the Viceroy is at stake, you would refuse! I must have a reason for your refusal."

"Sir Oliver," said Smith, leaning his long length over his chief's table, "you spoke of a secret that I had. You are right, and it is to that secret that I owe much of my success. If I attempt to run down the native assassins in this case, I shall have to work without a very great advantage and consequently may not measure up to your expectations. I must explain something which you may not know."

The eyes of the old official kindled, and he covered Smith's hand upon the table with his own.

"We are of the handful that guide many millions," he

(From "Secret Service Smith," by R. T. M. Scott. Copyright, 1923, by E. P. Dutton & Company, New York, and by Hodder & Stoughton, London, England.)

said, "and our duty is sacred. Your secret shall be my secret."

"When I first came to this country," continued Smith, "some ten years ago, I was fortunate enough to save a handsome looking native boy from the very jaws of a crocodile in the Hub River, near Karachi. Two shots from my automatic did it, but the boy still bears the marks of the mugger's teeth. That boy is now my servant. He literally adopted me as soon as he came out of the hospital. He would give his life for me, and through him I gain, from the interweaving circles of servants, the most minute details of the white man's life. Within one hour, here in Calcutta, I can get detailed information about the habits and doings of almost any white man in Bombay or Rangoon."

"You mean," said the chief, "that your boy will give you information about white people but not about his brother native?"

"It is not quite that," said Smith. "In the first place, I would not ask him to inform against his brother native. In the second place, if he did inform against his brother native, he would soon lose the confidence of his fellow servants, and I could no longer depend upon his information."

"I understand," replied Sir Oliver, "but—you must go. Even after what you have told me, I have more confidence in you than in anybody else. Work without your boy if you must, but take the case.

"Europe is ripe for a great conflict, and it may break out any time before 1914. German and Russian agents are at work in India to upset the Indian confidence in the empire. India in disruption would be a great inducement for our enemies to bring on the European struggle immediately. All this you know. Now consider what I am going to tell you.

"Yesterday we gained knowledge, without the details, of a country-wide plot to kill every important English official in India. The plot is engineered with German gold and Russian cupidity, but the tool to be used is the

ative. Only one thing is necessary for the tragedy to be arried out.

"What is needed is the signal for all the assassins to rike. That signal must be great enough to be heard in very town and village. It is the death of the Viceroy. I end you to Simla to prevent that signal being given."

Just as the night train was about to pull out of Calutta on its northern journey to the foothill of the Himalayas, Langa Doonh stood at the window of his master's compartment while tears ran down his face. A strange oy was in the tiny servants' compartment doing the nings he, Langa Doonh, had always done. Langa Doonh cept.

Smith knew the character and feelings of the faithful ndian servant, and he would have been surprised if his wn boy had failed to weep upon being left behind for ae first time in ten years.

"Sahib is his boy's father and mother," wept Langa oonh. "Sahib not tell why boy is left behind?"

"I will tell you," said Smith, leaning out of the window nd speaking low in the native tongue. "Nobody else can trust to do what I want done. Know you a man in the azaar who gossips, who tells everything he knows?"

"Sahib, I know such a man," replied the boy. "I know man who can tell everything he knows between two outhfuls of rice."

"Go to this man to-night," continued Smith, "and say at I have given you a holiday and left for Simla with reat secrecy. To-morrow I will telegraph you that my ew boy is no good and ask you to send me another. Read e telegram in the bazaar in the morning, and in the fternoon offer to write a *chit* to me for the boy who will ay his own railway fare so that you can keep the money r yourself."

"Sahib, no boy would pay so much."

"Then send nobody," replied Smith. "But wait and e."

"Sahib think bad man send spy to watch sahib?" sugested Langa Doonh with a look of understanding.

A shrill toot from the engine cut short the conversation. Langa Doonh hastily thrust in an extra box of matches and, as the train gathered speed, whipped out a strip of paper and pasted it over the compartment window. On the strip of paper was printed "Reserved." Langa Doonh, always thinking of his master's comfort, had stolen it from the station-master. A good boy was Langa Doonh.

II

During the hot months of summer most of the Government of India moves from its Calcutta offices to the cooler Himalayan heights of Simla. Headed by the Viceroy of India and the Commander-in-Chief of the Indian Army, all the high officials climb the seven thousand odd feet to the summer capital. With them go their wives and families and all the society of India that can afford it. For miles around their bungalows cluster upon the sides of the steep and winding roads and paths that surround Simla. There is one large and important hotel—the Grand Hotel—and several smaller ones. It was at the Grand Hotel that Smith registered.

Upon his arrival he discovered to his satisfaction that the Viceroy was absent upon a tiger hunt and would not return for several days. Nothing could have suited Smith better, for it afforded him an opportunity to put his plan into operation. It gave time for the enemy to approach him—perhaps to strike him. He believed that, in the great plot which was brewing, every government official would be watched, and especially the members of the Criminal Intelligence Department. It might be easier to persuade the plotters to find him than to find the plotters. Smith waited.

On the third day a native boy arrived from Calcutta with a note from Langa Doonh. Smith immediately engaged him in place of the boy he was using. The new boy accepted the moderate wage that he was offered with very little protest—far too little, Smith thought.

"What is your name?" Smith asked, although he had ust read it in the note.

"Sahib," the boy replied with a slight hesitation, "my ame is Ben Dudh."

"Go to my room, Ben Dudh," returned Smith, "and lay ut my dinner jacket." He tossed him a bunch of keys. Find out where everything is. The small key is for my ispatch box. Never open that unless I tell you to do o."

Two hours later Smith entered his room and found verything in perfect order. His dinner clothes, well ressed, were neatly placed upon the bed, and his dresser as arranged with mathematical precision. Every boot as in line against the wall and polished or whitened to erfection. Upon the small steel dispatch box lay the unch of keys. As Smith entered, his new boy emerged om the bathroom, silently salaamed and left the room. Ie would stand outside the door until his master called im. Evidently he was well trained.

Carelessly Smith hung his *topi* upon the door knob, ffectually blocking the keyhole. After a rapid glance into ne bathroom he bent swiftly over the dispatch box and xamined the keyhole with a pocket magnifying glass. A it of lint that had been there before was still there. The ox had not been opened. Picking up the key ring, he crutinized the small key with care. With a pin he picked ff a speck of soft wax such as might be used for making n impression from which a duplicate key could be produced. With a smile he replaced the keys upon the box. Iis plan was working.

Early the next morning, while eating his *chotahazari* in ed, Smith received a most unexpected visitor who was receded by a neatly engraved card bearing the name of Ir. Cyril Sanderson. He was a unique character in Simla —probably the only shopkeeper who was ever admitted to imla's fashionable society. There was reason for it, howver, since Mr. Sanderson, besides being the owner of sevral expensive antique stores in different countries, was a oted authority on Chinese pottery and a highly educated

man. Besides this he managed to be known as the best dressed man in India, and carried himself with that easy and delightful grace of manner that characterizes the well bred of every nation.

All this Smith knew, and he knew likewise that Sanderson was an extremely important political agent of the Indian Government, a fact that was closely guarded from public knowledge.

Mr. Sanderson entered the room dressed in spotless white riding clothes. The cut of his breeches proclaimed without a doubt that a London tailor had done the work, and his boots, shaped to his leg as if by nature, shone with the utmost brilliancy. In his buttonhole was a cornflower, the dark blue of which was a perfect match for his eyes. It was said that he was never without this flower in the daytime. Dropping his *topi* and an ivory-handled riding-crop upon the table, he advanced to the bed with outstretched hand.

"My dear fellow, why did you not look me up? Let me put you up at the club! Or has somebody been before me?"

Smith's long frame twisted under the sheet as he thrust out a hand with a grin.

"Thanks," he said. "Was going to call to-day. Sit down."

Sanderson drew up a chair and extended his legs as one does after riding. Smith's eye ran over the figure of his guest and rested upon the soles of his boots where some red mud or clay stuck close up against the heels. So immaculate was the clothing of Mr. Sanderson that Smith could not fail to note the slight defect upon the soles of the boots.

"Why the honor of this visit?" asked Smith.

"My dear chap, we are somewhat in the same profession, I take it. I know you and, I suppose, you know me."

"Uh-huh," said Smith, "but why the honor of this visit?"

"The honor is mine," replied Sanderson, smiling genially. "There is not much use in fencing with a man of your

ility, Mr. Smith, even if there were any object. I will me to my point bluntly.

"As you know, I deal with political intriguers in foreign untries. Sometimes I deal with them when they come to is country. One of them—a master hand—is here now, Simla. He is the brains of an organized native move- ent to kill the Viceroy and all the white leaders in India. ou are here, of course, to guard the Viceroy; and no tter guard could he have."

"Uh-huh," said Smith, "but why the honor of this sit?"

"I have given myself the honor in order to seek your l. I have received advice from a small town in Europe at this master of political intrigue is here but—I do not cow who he is. Will you advise me of everything you rn so that we may work together?"

"Yes," replied Smith, "if I learn anything."

"Then you have unearthed nothing yet?"

"Not a thing," said Smith, swinging his long legs out bed. "You'll excuse me if I take a bath. I'll call in a y or so."

III

Two days later Smith, on leaving his room, kicked over ; servant's shoes where the boy had left them before tering his master's room. He was about to pass on when ; eye was attracted to a bit of red, close to the heel on e sole of one of the shoes. He stooped and examined it d found that it was a smearing of red clay. Immediately remembered the red substance on the boot soles of e immaculate Mr. Sanderson. It might be chance, he ought, but it was worth looking into.

The Viceroy would be back in Simla upon the following y, and in the evening there was to be a state dinner and state ball. The ball was the one affair at which it would most difficult to guard the Viceroy; so many people d to be admitted. Something had to be done and done ickly.

Smith walked out into the courtyard of the hotel and looked at the ground. It was dusty gray; there was no red. He followed the verandah around to the back and looked into the compound where the native servants congregated. Here, likewise, there was no red soil.

He took a rickshaw and rode down to the mall where was located the antique shop of Cyril Sanderson. Not once on the way did he see any red earth or clay that could smear the boots of a walking man.

Inside the antique shop Smith was met by a native attendant, very polite and anxious to please. Mr. Sanderson was out, and the attendant was extremely sorry that he did not know when his master would return.

In the large room in which Smith found himself were hundreds of rare objects of art and antiquity. Priceless tapestries hung upon the walls and huge grinning gods and goddesses stood upon tables carved with wondrous skill by native fingers. Prayer wheels, hand-illuminated books and Chinese dishes—blue and white and famille rose—were scattered everywhere. For some time Smith examined various things and then halted before a tall, bronze stork, around the neck of which was hung a pair of field glasses in a case. For a minute he regarded the glasses and then called to the attendant.

"How much are the field glasses?"

"Sahib, the glasses are not for sale," replied the attendant.

Smith turned his back on the stork with the glasses and was confronted by a large window cut up into many small panes of glass. As he gazed through it at the distant summits of the Himalayas, he became aware of something unusual in the window itself. Simla can be very dusty in the summer time, and the outside of the window was none too clean, with the exception of one small square of glass near the top. This one pane had recently been cleaned—perhaps hurriedly dusted off with a handkerchief. Through it Smith saw the round top of a small mountain but a few miles distant. He realized that with the glasses

: could obtain a very close view of the tiny peak by ccusing through the recently cleaned pane of glass.

Smith knew the topography of Simla and the surround-g country. He knew that the cleaned window-pane gave view of Mount Jakko, a favorite turning point for eques-ans, famous for its hundreds of wild monkeys and for . old *fakir,* or holy man, who lived in a tiny hut upon e extreme summit.

Smith acted upon impulses and very slight indications. e left the shop, dismissed his rickshaw, and hired a rid-g horse from a near-by livery. Along the winding road took his course to Mount Jakko.

It was the middle of the afternoon, and the sun was tt. After leaving Simla, only a few natives trudged past m, carrying wood. He was almost alone amid the giant aks of the great mountains, that stretched for many les into the north and pushed gleaming snow peaks up om the horizon. Mount Jakko was but a toy compared t the distant monsters.

The road circled Mount Jakko close to the summit and turned upon itself, thus forming a loop. As Smith turned o this loop the chatterings and screechings of a troop of onkeys broke forth. In a few minutes he reached a point ere he could see the whole hilltop. Everywhere scam-red monkeys—big monkeys, little monkeys, mother mon-ys, and baby monkeys. They chattered and screamed d made short rushes toward Smith as his horse advanced wly at a walk.

In the very middle of the excited monkeys and on the ghest point was a small hut before which sat an old tive, squatting with crossed legs and hands resting upon . knees. He wore but a loin-cloth, and his skin clung to frail frame like old parchment. So still he sat that he ght have been dead.

Smith had seen the old man years before and, as he zed at him, he could not see the slightest change. He ght not even have moved during the intervening years. was said that the holy man of Mount Jakko was very l; some said that his age was far beyond a hundred

years; some said hundreds. No white man in Simla kne
when the old man had come to Mount Jakko.

Smith reined in his horse at the foot of a little path tha
ran the dozen yards or more between the road and th
hermit's hut. The path was of red clay. He bent in hi
saddle to examine it and something blue, a little to on
side of the reddish path, attracted his attention. Dismount
ing, he scrambled a few steps up the slope and discovere
a withered cornflower—the flower that was always wor
by Cyril Sanderson.

From the path itself Smith could learn nothing. To
many natives had climbed it to leave a handful of rice o
a cup of water for the old man whom they venerated.

As he rode back along the steep mountain sides to Simla
Smith pondered deeply what he had seen. He believed tha
he was making progress and that the enemy was coming
to him. If he only came soon enough—and Smith sur
vived—all would be well. So deeply was Smith considering
the situation that he paid little attention to the road o
his surroundings. To his left the *kud,* or hillside, droppe
swiftly away for hundreds of feet into the valley below
To his right the mountainside rose almost perpendicularly

Suddenly a huge rock crashed down within a few feet
of the horse's head and bounded away into the valley below. The horse reared and bolted back along the road fo
a hundred yards. Smith was almost taken unawares, but he
managed to keep his seat and his stirrups. When the horse
was quiet once more he again turned toward Simla.

As he again approached the spot where the stone had
fallen, Smith, holding the reins with his left hand, placed
his right hand upon the handle of an automatic pistol in
his right coat pocket.

Slowly he passed the place where the stone had fallen
Glancing upward he saw nothing but jutting rocks and
steep rising slopes. He bent forward slightly, ready to use
his spurs. As he did so there was a flash and a sharp
report from above. The horse reared again, and Smith
fell, a limp and inert figure upon the dusty road, face
upward and mouth partly open. The echoes of the sho

and the hoofbeats of the running horse died away together and there was silence. Nothing visible moved or stirred upon the road or on the hillside.

It may have been several minutes before a turbaned head was lifted above a boulder on the mountainside. Cautiously a native face peered down at the still figure lying where it had fallen. By degrees the native leaned further out and looked up and down the road. As he did so an arm from the figure on the road shot upward, and there was a roar from a forty-five Colt.

The next minute the long, lanky Smith was clawing his way up the steep slope with astonishing agility. His very speed carried him over spots where there was not sufficient foothold for him to have stood still. Bits of jutting rock and small bushes served him in his mad rush toward the boulder from which the head and shoulders of the native had suddenly disappeared at the pistol shot. In a few minutes he reached his objective and, panting from his violent exertion, stood looking down at the crumpled form of a native beside which was lying an old-fashioned carbine. Pistol in hand, he stooped and felt the dark skin over the heart. Almost at once he started up alert, but it was too late.

"The son of a pig has fired his last shot," came a voice in the native tongue from a boulder not three yards above Smith's head. "Move not, but drop thy gun if thou wouldst live but a few minutes longer."

Smith dropped his pistol upon the little depression of ground behind a big boulder and stood perfectly still, his back to the speaker. As he did so the native at his feet rose with a contemptuous grin and spat full in his face. Smith did not move under the insult, nor did the expression on his face alter.

"Turn, thou pig, and let us see thy face," commanded the voice that had spoken before.

Smith turned and saw before him, upon the upper rock, a gaunt man of the hills with a savage and cruel face. There was fanaticism and all the cunning that goes with it, but there was nothing intellectual. With a carbine in

the hollow of his arm the native scowled down. Smith saw a desperate tool, but he was convinced that the man was only a tool.

After a pause of malignant contemplation the man on the rock, who seemed to be the leader of the two natives, climbed down to the hollow behind the great boulder where the three were completely concealed from the road below. He picked up Smith's pistol and handled it curiously before turning to his companion with the order:

"Take thy knife and dig. There is enough earth to cover this filthy swine."

IV

It was to be his grave. Still Smith did not move, did not speak, did not show any expression upon his face. It seemed to annoy the native standing guard with the carbine, and yet there was a trace of admiration in his eyes.

"Allah should have had thee for a son," he exclaimed. "Art thou not afraid to die?"

"Only the ignorant and the guilty are afraid to die," replied Smith, using the native tongue with great fluency.

"Thou speakest well," returned the native. "If thy skin were dark only Allah would know thee for a Christian dog."

Smith did not reply, and there was silence as the grave grew. It would be very shallow but sufficient to protect the body from any glance from above. Just before it was finished the digger looked meaningly at Smith.

"He may have money," he said.

The leader nodded assent, and the digger of the grave threw down his knife and approached Smith. What happened took place with the speed of lightning.

As the would-be robber came between him and the native with the carbine, Smith, who was standing with his hands clasped in front of him, slipped the fingers of his right hand into his left cuff. As the thieving fingers entered the first pocket, Smith drove his knee with great force into the pit of the native's stomach and, at the same

time extracting a small revolver from inside his left sleeve, fired as the other hill man brought the carbine to his shoulder. The carbine clattered to the ground with both natives, the one senseless from the blow in the stomach and the other clutching his right shoulder, from which blood was already trickling.

It was but the work of a few seconds for Smith to collect the two carbines and his automatic. Silently he seated himself upon the ground with his back against the boulder and waited, his heavy pistol resting upon his knee. The wounded native scowled his hatred, but it was not until the other one finally moved and sat up that Smith spoke.

"Allah is not the friend of cowards who strike in the dark," he said.

There was no answer and Smith continued.

"If Allah will not permit even me to be killed, how can it be possible that the great one who guides India may suffer death at your vile hands?"

"Bah!" exclaimed the leader of the two natives, spitting upon the ground in his rage. "The great one, as thou callest him, shall be blown into a thousand pieces for the birds to eat."

"Bah!" returned Smith, spitting with almost exact similarity. "There are none brave enough to carry the explosive."

It is possible that the native realized that information was being extracted from him. It is also possible that he merely lapsed into sullen silence on account of his humiliation and the pain in his shoulder. At all events Smith could not taunt him into speaking again.

"Go to thy master," he finally said, "and tell him I send word that his servants are fools, and that he is a coward."

Both natives looked up in amazement.

"We are free to go?" asked the leader in surprise.

"A grown man does not make prisoners of children," returned Smith contemptuously. "Say to your master that he is known to me and that I despise him as I despise the *chokras* he sent to kill me."

As the two natives scrambled off, half bewildered at the unexpected turn of events, Smith picked up one of the carbines and tossed it after them.

"Take something to protect thyself," he called. "A rabbit might cross thy path, and I would have thee live to deliver my message."

The wounded native snatched at the carbine like a wild beast and, his right arm being useless, tried to fire it at Smith pistolwise with his left hand—only to find that it was the empty carbine which had been thrown to him. In a fit of fury he cast the weapon down the mountainside.

"The vultures will peck thy dirty carcass," he screamed, "and the monkeys will play with the bones of the foul pig who rules India. May Allah curse thee!"

The venomous figures disappeared around a rock, and Smith was left alone in the rays of the declining sun. Already long shadows were being cast by distant peaks upon the hills and valleys below him.

For a while the victor in the contest sat deep in thought before the grave that had been dug for him. The enemy had come to him without doubt, but only underlings—and he wanted the master hand.

Smith reasoned that the last place they would look for him at present was exactly where he was, but he also reasoned that he would be followed as soon as he made a move. His mind dwelt on the field glasses in Sanderson's shop and the cleaned pane of glass giving a view of Mount Jakko. He thought of the reddish path where he had found the blue cornflower—Sanderson's favorite flower. Lastly he considered his would-be murderer's reference to the monkeys playing with the bones of the Viceroy. There were monkeys on Mount Jakko. Something drew him to Mount Jakko and he decided upon a dangerous move for any white man, but a move for which he had been prepared ever since he had reached Simla.

Concealed by the great boulder, Smith quickly stripped off his clothing until he revealed underneath everything else a loin-cloth of cheap cotton such as might be worn by a water carrier or humble country wayfarer. From a

pocket he produced a flask of dark liquid which he proceeded to rub over himself by means of strips torn from his shirt. For a long time he worked over his back which he could not see, but in the end every portion of the white body had been changed to the dark shade of the average native. A tight roll of cloth was next unwound and dexterously swathed about the head into a *puggaree*. Smith, of the C. I. D., was to all appearances a scantily clad Indian.

V

As the sun sank behind a distant mountain, a lanky native figure with a bundle crept cautiously down the mountainside and, in the first gloom of night, stepped out upon the road. Smith, the agent of the Criminal Intelligence Department, had disappeared from the world, and an unknown native padded his way along the winding road toward Mount Jakko. To find him, Smith thought, would require the keenest brain working against the government; and if Mount Jakko were connected with the great murder plot he intended to be in a position from which he could observe.

Where the long, winding road rises and branches into the little loop circling the tiny summit of Mount Jakko, Smith entered upon his new rôle with a thoroughness which lacked no precaution. Throwing himself full length upon the road, face downwards, he slowly drew up his knees and then pushed the front part of his body forward. Before him he shoved his bundle. In this fashion, like a measuring worm, he continued to progress gradually along the road in the darkness. Probably no eye could see him, but if any did it would see only a religious fanatic crawling toward the hut of the holy man of Mount Jakko. All was silent save for the sharp note of an occasional night bird and the distant intoning of some native *mantram* chanter.

When Smith, in his laborious crawling, reached the red clay path which led to the hut, he turned outwards and

crawled to a tree trunk on the outside of the road upon the very edge of the declivity. Facing the ghostly hut he sat with his back against the trunk, watching and listening. As his eyes became more and more accustomed to his surroundings he thought sometimes that he could distinguish the hermit seated before his hut but, although the distance was only fifty yards, he could not be sure.

He was tired and hungry and rather cold in the night air without his usual clothing. As the night wore on he finally fell into a gentle sleep and awoke suddenly as a monkey scampered over his outstretched legs. The dawn was breaking in the east, and a mist hung over the hilltop, obscuring objects even more than the star-pierced darkness of the night. Cramped and cold as he was, Smith drew his legs up into the Buddhic posture of meditation and sat perfectly still while the mist lifted.

As the light increased with the rising sun the animal and bird life awoke. There was singing from a hundred bird throats in the surrounding bushes and trees, and bands of monkeys chattered and chased over the ground with thoughts on food. Slowly the mist lifted, revealing the bare top of Mount Jakko, the hermit's hut, and the holy man himself squatting in his usual posture before the open door.

A gazelle trotted across the open ground and thrust its nose into the hermit's begging bowl in search of rice. Scarcely had it done so when it lifted its head nervously and then bounded away in mad alarm. Smith puzzled over the incident. What could have so terrified the animal?

As the sun mounted higher Smith realized more and more how extremely hungry he was. He ached in every bone from the rigidity of his posture, and faint waves of giddiness came over him. He was also thirsty, and he envied the old hermit when a native mounted to the road by a steep footpath and carried an earthen jug of water to the silent figure before the hut. Another came bringing a bowl of rice. This second native, in leaving, noticed

Smith and called to the one who had brought the water.

"Chela!" he exclaimed, meaning that Smith was a pupil who had come to learn wisdom from the holy man of Mount Jakko.

Smith was still puzzling over the alarm of the gazelle when something of much greater significance occurred. Another native mounted by the steep footpath and approached the old hermit. Smith's heart beat more swiftly as he recognized one of the two hillmen who had attacked him upon the previous afternoon. It was the junior of the two, the one he had kicked in the stomach. Now, indeed, would his disguise have to stand a severe test. Calmly he settled into the stiffness of the posture of meditation and waited.

The hillman, however, favored Smith with but a passing glance. He salaamed low before the hermit and poured a handful of rice into the begging bowl. As he did so he spoke some words which were too low for Smith to hear. There was no reply from the holy man, and the hillman, after salaaming once more, departed by the way he had come.

Smith breathed more easily after this last visitor had disappeared. At first he had thought that the hillman was trailing him, but he decided that something much deeper was taking place before his eyes—something he was yet far from understanding.

A party of white men and women cantered around the loop. It was the cool of the morning when white people took their exercise. They were followed by a slow-crawling rickshaw, and once again Smith's heart quickened as he recognized the passenger. It was no other than the gaunt hillman who had been the leader of the attack upon him.

Slowly the rickshaw approached. Three evil-looking coolies pushed from behind and two more guided the shaft in front. Very slowly they came and halted at the foot of the red path leading to the hermit's hut.

Something seemed to be wrong with one of the rick-

shaw wheels, and the big hillman, his arm in a sling, got out and stood silently to one side while a coolie tilted the frail vehicle and spun the troublesome wheel. The coolie gave the wheel a second vigorous twirl, and all five burst into a clamor as it slipped free from the axle, rolled across the road and plunged into the valley far below. A tourist was passing in a rickshaw at the time, and the big hillman cursed roundly and ordered two of the coolies to return to the bazaar and bring another rickshaw.

Two coolies immediately started off in the direction of Simla, while the other three walked a hundred yards to some bushes on the outer side of the road. The tall hillman seemed to notice the hermit for the first time. He salaamed awkwardly with his uninjured arm and then retired to the bushes not far from his coolies. The broken rickshaw was left standing drunkenly by the side of the road.

Silence reigned, and Smith noticed that he and the hermit were the only two who remained visible to any one approaching along the road. Some scheme was on foot he felt sure, and it did not seem to be directed toward him. He was fairly confident that he had not been recognized. Was his late opponent, the wounded hillman, acting upon his own initiative after all, or was he acting under orders? What was the idea of breaking down the rickshaw? Smith felt sure that the wheel had been sent over the precipice on purpose.

As he thought over the series of events a sound came from far up the road in the direction of Simla. It was a sound that brought real fear to the heart of Smith. In a flash he realized that he was seated before the stage that was set for the great tragedy of India. Sounding through the clear mountain air was the deep honk of a motor car.

On account of the narrow winding roads of Simla, only two people are allowed the use of motor cars—the Viceroy and the commander-in-chief of the army. The commander-in-chief had no ladies in his household and preferred his horse. The coming motor was almost surely that of the Viceroy.

VI

Smith knew that he must act now and act quickly. The life of the Viceroy and the fate of India depended upon him. If he failed, death and destruction would be spread broadcast.

With the great necessity for immediate action came the quickest reasoning and the swiftest intuition. Smith threw himself face downward and commenced the measuring worm progress of the devotee in the direction of the red path before him. He had gained the middle of the road and was approaching the broken rickshaw when a second honk from the motor car warned him that it was turning into the loop. The rapid hoofbeats of trotting horses came to his ears and, glancing to the right, he saw the red pennants of an escort of Bengal Lancers as they topped the rise in ground.

In another undulation Smith reached the rickshaw. He rose to his feet, seized it upon the wheelless side by axle and shaft and, exerting all his strength, ran it upon one wheel to the steep mountainside. A shot rang out from the bushes but in another minute the rickshaw careened over the precipice and fell the dizzy height.

As Smith staggered back to the road and broke into a run, there came a mighty explosion from the valley below. The whole mountain top trembled from the concussion. Native cries and curses came from the bushes. Another shot rang out, and Smith went down in a heap at the foot of the red clay path. He tried to rise but failed, and started wriggling his way up the path with his hands and one leg. He was wounded, but he was not satisfied that his work was finished.

One more shot came from the bushes, and then the giant hillman, screaming with rage and brandishing his knife, broke from cover and rushed at the wriggling Smith. In his rear came a score of other hillmen. Every bush seemed to have concealed an enemy. They had thrown all caution aside and on they came with shouts

of maddest fury. All they desired was revenge upon the man who had wrecked their plans.

Smith saw his enemies coming. He also saw the Bengal Lancers halted in the distance with the motor car in the rear. He felt in his turban for his revolver and found it gone. It lay on the road ten yards away—too far to reach it in time with a broken leg. The pain in his leg was terrific, and dizziness swept over him. As in a dream he saw a dark form bound across the road and a familiar face bend over him.

"Tr-r-ot!" came a sharp military command from the distance. It was followed by "Gallop! . . . Charge!"

A pistol shot sounded in Smith's ears and then another. The thunder of running horses passed by him and he caught a glimpse of red pennants on couched lances. Then all was dark.

He awoke with the trickle of burning brandy in his throat. He found his head resting in somebody's lap and looked up into the face of Langa Doonh—the faithful servant who had been left behind in Calcutta.

"Glad you are feeling better," said an officer as he screwed the top back on his pocket flask. "You have done the country a great service. His Excellency will reward you. Your friend, here, saved your life. He picked up your revolver and killed one and wounded another. We couldn't get to you in time."

Smith was yet too faint to speak, but he understood what was said. He placed his hand over that of his servant and pressed. As he did so an old Anglo-Indian, grizzled and weather-beaten, shouldered his way into the little group and gazed down at the wounded man. A smile slowly spread over his face.

"It's a good disguise," he said, "and it takes the head of the Criminal Intelligence Department to penetrate it. Have you got the leader of these murderers, Smith?"

Smith was about to reply when his eyes fell upon the old hermit seated not two yards from him. He hesitated and then grinned.

"Uh-huh," he said quietly.

Something crunched within the hermit's mouth, and the old head fell forward and the body went limp upon the ground.

"He has just taken poison," added Smith, indicating the crumpled figure. "Sir Oliver, the job is finished."

"The hermit?" exclaimed Sir Oliver. "Impossible! These old fellows never bother with worldly matters."

Quickly Smith slipped off his *puggaree* and dipped it into the hermit's water bowl. He reached for the inert head and rubbed the wet cloth over the face. Paint and grease soon stained the white cotton and in a few minutes the dead features of Cyril Sanderson were revealed.

"The —— scoundrel!" exclaimed Sir Oliver. "He must have double-crossed our government for years."

The old sleuth dived suddenly into the hut and began an investigation.

"Sahib not angry with boy for following him to Simla?" asked Langa Doonh.

"I can never be angry with Langa Doonh," replied Smith.

"Have put clean clothes in bag under bush," went on the servant. "Sahib like clean shirt?"

Before Smith could reply, Sir Oliver's voice boomed out from the hut.

"Another holy man," he called, "and a wireless set with wires leading through the wall to where our friend Sanderson sat at the door. The game must have been to set off the explosive in the rickshaw by wireless at the exact instant that His Excellency's motor passed."

They carried out of the hut another old man, almost the exact duplicate of what Sanderson had been with the aid of his clever make-up. His hands and feet were tied, and he seemed to be quite lifeless.

"Better have him propped up against the wall in the sunlight," advised Smith. "He is probably in a state of *samadhi* or religious trance. You may be sure that he is quite innocent."

Sir Oliver himself cut the cords that bound the old man

and helped to seat him beside his door. Then he turned and looked quizzically down at Smith.

"Smith," he said, "I saved India when I sent you to Simla, but I am afraid that His Excellency will give you all the credit. Before you are driven away in the vice-regal car to be nursed at vice-regal Lodge, I want you to promise me that you will not leave my service to accept any fancy appointment. Will you promise?"

"Uh-huh," said Smith with a grin.

R. T. M. SCOTT

BOMBAY DUCK

AURELIUS SMITH, as he sat at tea with his secretary and versatile assistant, did not look very much like a detective, yet there was something calculatingly cool and deliberate about each trivial motion which he made. His old blue dressing gown, which he persistently refused to throw away, wrapped his long and lanky body in many angles as he sprawled ridiculously in his chair. His slender fingers dropped a slice of lemon into his cup with the deliberate motion of science. Bernice Asterley watched her employer with considerable interest—much more interest than a young woman usually gives to a man who takes tea in a perfectly impossible old blue dressing gown.

Langa Doonh, native servant from India, brought fresh muffins just as the doorbell sounded. Smith glanced at the muffins, but the urge for tobacco brought a black briar from his pocket, and he wandered lazily to the front window and stuffed dark shreds into the bowl as he stared moodily into Fenton Street, tiny, one-block offshoot of lower Fifth Avenue. Few New Yorkers know Fenton Street, with its little colony of artists and students of strange things.

Bernice watched the back of the old dressing gown at the window and noted that a frayed blue cord permitted what was once a tassel to trail upon the floor. She turned back to the table when Langa Doonh came from the front door with letters which the letter carrier had left. Smith too turned his attention again to the table, but he merely glanced at the addresses on the envelopes and took up his cup without seeming to see the muffins. Bernice thought

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that he lived on tobacco except when Langa Doonh cooked a curry.

There was continued silence, and Langa Doonh, quite satisfied that he had toasted sufficient muffins, took his departure to do some marketing for dinner. The little household was so well acquainted that words were almost unnecessary.

A few minutes later the bell sounded again, and this time Bernice went to the door while Smith stood with his back to the table and watched her leave the room. She returned a moment later with a man who followed her too closely to permit the formality of being announced. Nor did he wait for that formality after entering the room, but jerked a gun from his side pocket and pointed it threateningly toward Smith.

At sight of the gun Smith staggered backward against the table and threw an arm behind him for support. His hand, outstretched, plunged into his tea, and the cup crashed to the floor while he shook the hot liquid from his fingers and wiped them frantically upon his dressing gown. An expression of genuine fear and consternation overspread the face of Bernice as she saw her employer so visibly affected. Never before had she known his iron nerve to collapse in the face of danger. It was his collapse, rather than the threatening gun, which set her trembling a little to one side of the two men.

Up to this moment not a word had been spoken, but the stranger ended the silence. His was a cool and cutting voice, insolent in its indifference. Indeed, it seemed to Bernice that it was somewhat the voice of Smith himself when in a fighting mood—utterly devoid of emotion, cold, unconcerned.

"Very pretty acting," remarked the stranger, with the assurance of the slightest of sneers, "but your servant has just left the house and the broken cup will call no help."

But Bernice knew that Smith was aware of Langa Doonh's having left the house. She knew that he had not upset the cup to call assistance. She gained control of

herself and watched, with apprehension, the powerful man behind the pistol while his dark eyes ran swiftly about the room.

"Uh-huh," said Smith by way of conversation after a considerable pause, and there was some relief for Bernice in the calmness of his blue-gray eyes.

Suddenly the stranger stepped up to Smith and pulled the long cord from the loops of his dressing gown. He pushed a chair against a radiator and indicated it to Smith, who sat down lazily but obediently. Rapidly the intruder ran the cord around Smith's arms and chest and tied him to the coils in the rear. He seemed ambidextrous as he shifted the gun from hand to hand and watched Bernice during the operation.

And during what followed there was no opportunity for her to be other than a spectator and it was only a matter of a few minutes before the man had gone. During those minutes he swiftly searched the room, pulling out many drawers and paying, perhaps, more attention to the typewriter desk of Bernice than to anything else. His keen eyes never remained away from Bernice for many seconds, and frequently he glanced at Smith while he searched. For a moment he stopped and scrutinized a small Hindu god before which Langa Doonh frequently burned incense.

"Ganesh!" he exclaimed and turned to Smith with a smile which cloaked part of a sneer. "This elephant-headed god must account for your success."

But Smith appeared too bored to reply, and the man strolled over to the tea table and glanced at the letters, picking up one in a blue envelope only to drop it again into the spilled tea. Once more he approached Smith and ran his hands into the dressing-gown pockets before backing to the door and stepping swiftly out. A moment later there was the roar of a departing motor.

Bernice was at the window in a flash, but failed to read the number of the departing car. She turned back into the room and stamped her foot in vexation.

"Put it over us completely!" she exclaimed.

Smith grinned, and his long legs straightened while his binding snapped as he rose to his feet.

"Thought I knew the tensile strength of that old cord," he remarked as he took the rope rather tenderly in his hands and proceeded to tie it together again.

"But—but what did he want?" asked Bernice, looking in amazement at the broken cord. "He took nothing."

"He was clever, but he failed to find what he wanted," returned Smith. "From the window I saw him waiting in a car and watching the avenue corner—where the letter carrier turns. Of course I did not know he was waiting for the letter carrier, and I did not expect him to come in here."

"Well?" queried Bernice as Smith refilled his pipe and kicked the broken cup under the table.

"He's a killer," remarked Smith between puffs. "Thin, cruel lips and the eyes of a fanatic! Cool and cunning as he is merciless! Good thing he didn't come to kill. Might not have been so easy to handle."

"Easy to handle!" exclaimed Bernice. "It seems to me that he did all the handling."

"Thought he did," returned Smith, looking quizzically at his assistant. "You won the trick when the expression of your face convinced him that I had lost my nerve. It was the best acting that you ever did."

For a moment the girl stared at the lanky man with the pipe. Her face crimsoned, and she looked uncomfortable.

"Ah, well," remarked Smith, as though talking to the pipe which he held in his long fingers, "I suppose a man must appear rather a helpless creature in the eyes of his secretary."

"You are in one of your tantalizing moods!" exclaimed Bernice, stamping her foot for the second time. "I don't believe you have any idea what the man came for."

"Maybe so and maybe not so," retorted Smith. "He waited for the letter carrier and therefore came for a letter—a blue letter like the one he tossed back into the

spilled tea. There were seven letters, and I could guess the contents of six by a glance at the envelopes."

Bernice snatched up the letters and counted them. There were six.

"The seventh," said Smith, "I managed to secrete under my dressing gown during the process of sticking my hand into the tea and wiping it dry again."

"Oh!" ejaculated Bernice as Smith drew a blue envelope from under his arm.

The letter was both brief and unusual. It was addressed to Aurelius Smith and read:

Dear Sir:

Please come at once and discover the murderer of Richard. I shall await you, if necessary, until quite late this evening.

The letter was signed by Sybla Fanhaven.

"Wealthy woman," muttered Smith. "Fashionable address. Dictated to secretary, in all probability, since the body of it is typewritten." He scrutinized the signature closely. "Old woman, but full of energy. Eccentric. Strong will. Humph!"

"What do you make of it?" asked Bernice.

"Doubly interesting because of our recent visitor with the gun," returned Smith. "I think the case will be short and swift and will probably end—in death."

"Can I go with you?" asked Bernice.

Smith's eyes showed, at their corners, a faint smile of appreciation, but he walked over to the mantelpiece without answering and took up the little Hindu god.

"Old Ganesh," he soliloquized. "He knew you for the Hindu god of wisdom—god of luck to most natives. He must know India. Devilish mean man to handle. Hope you will give me some of your luck."

Gently he replaced the image and walked slowly from the room with his head bowed in thought.

And Bernice knew that she was to be left behind.

It was a large library into which Smith was shown

shortly after the sun had set. A single lamp upon a table dimly revealed the fact that the four walls were lined with books from floor to ceiling, except where two large pictures, two windows and a pair of sliding doors broke the array of literature. Beside the table were a man and a woman in evening dress. The woman, though quite old, had the skin and eyes of youth beneath her white hair. The man was the man who had called upon Smith that afternoon with a gun.

"Ah, Mr. Smith," exclaimed the woman vivaciously, extending her hand without rising, "you came quickly. I should have invited you to dinner, but you will join us, anyway."

"Thank you," said Smith, taking the outstretched hand without appearing to notice the man with the black eyes.

"There will be only the three of us. Do you know that you almost kissed my hand?"

"You held your hand," replied Smith, "as only a woman who has lived much abroad can hold it."

He was looking, with polite indifference, at the man as he spoke.

"Gregory," she said, "I hope he likes curry." She turned back to Smith. "This is Mr. Gregory Avondale."

The dark-eyed man rose from his chair and there was just the fleeting hint of a sneer as he smiled pleasantly and extended his hand. Another instant and he bit his lip slightly as he met Smith's grasp. In shaking hands the man who exerts the first pressure gains a terrible advantage, and the long fingers of the blue-eyed man put forth the unexpected and surprising strength that lay in them. It was a declaration of war on the part of Smith.

"Mrs. Fanhaven," said Smith, dropping the rather limp hand, "you wrote me regarding the death of Richard."

She left her chair immediately and crossed the room almost with the grace of a young girl. Concealed lights flooded the room and revealed details which had been in shadow. Beneath a bird cage, suspended near a window, she pointed upward.

"Poor boy!" she said very simply.

Smith's face was quite blank of expression as he crossed the room and looked down upon a dead canary lying upon the bottom of the cage. He turned his eyes a little and looked into those of the woman who had summoned him. Self-control was what he saw and joy of life and perfect honesty capable of defying consequences. If sorrow were there, it was hidden by the courage of the grande dame—that courage which meets the great and the little equally.

"Last night," she said, "somebody strangled Richard. Poor boy! I must know who did it."

Gently Smith raised a hand and attempted to open the little sliding door of the cage. The catch stuck, and the cage swayed upon the suspending chain.

"Good!" said Smith. "The murderer steadied the cage with his left hand while he opened the door with his right. The projecting bottom of the cage would have been seized by the left hand with the fingers on top and the thumb underneath. The top surface is rough and will not take an impression, but the bottom surface is smooth. Tomorrow I shall photograph the bottom of the cage and show you the thumb print of the murderer."

"Exceedingly clever," said Avondale, strolling over to join them. "I opened the cage in just that way myself when I examined the bird this morning."

"Uh-huh," said Smith and questioned Mrs. Fanhaven. "This bird was a good singer and always sang at night if the lights were turned on suddenly?"

"Always," agreed Mrs. Fanhaven quickly.

"This library is on the second floor," commented Smith, staring slowly about the room. "Your bedroom, madam? It is also on this floor, is it not? You could hear the bird sing from your bedroom? You are a light sleeper?"

"Yes, yes, yes," answered Mrs. Fanhaven, watching Smith's face with keen interest. "I like the way you work."

The tall investigator shrugged his shoulders slightly and went back to the table, where he took up a telephone and called his Fenton Street number. Out of the corner of his

eye he glimpsed Avondale, who seemed considerably interested in what was to be said over the wire.

"Oh, Bernice," he spoke shortly, "I forgot my gun. Bring it over to Mrs. Fenhaven's house at eleven. You will finish those notes by half past ten. Yes—at eleven." He turned directly to Avondale, looking at him over the top of the telephone. "I want my heavy automatic."

"How interesting!" exclaimed Mrs. Fanhaven, coming back to the table as quickly as she had left it. "I love to be on the right side in a drama."

"If you send for a heavy automatic in the case of a dead canary," remarked Avondale, lighting a cigarette and puffing it from a holder at least two feet in length, "it would be interesting to know what you require in the case of a dead human being."

"Oh, in that case I usually require an undertaker," retorted Smith dryly. "He might even be useful tonight."

"I am afraid you are not taking this case seriously, Mr. Smith," interrupted Mrs. Fanhaven. "You are pretending splendidly for our entertainment. You are an exceptional man or I should not permit it. Please go on."

"We all wear masks," retorted Smith quickly. "Few of us ever take them off. Your own mask is beautiful and almost impenetrable. Years ago, if one believed in reincarnation, you stepped to the guillotine smelling a rose. Exposure of emotion is not done in your world in little things or in great things. Few know the difference between great and small. There is not much difference, amid infinity, between the sinking of a continent and the death of a canary."

"Ah, Gregory," said Mrs. Fanhaven, "we are fortunate in having this guest at our last dinner. If he could only prove some of his words." She turned to Smith. "Tear a mask from one of us, please."

"Your own face, madam," answered Smith, "has shown no grief over the death of your pet, and yet—"

Suddenly he reached for her hand, which was clenched, and uncurled the fingers to expose deep, biting marks of the nails upon the pink palm.

"Poor boy!" she said, glancing back toward the cage.

"I say capital!" remarked Avondale with a supercilious smile unseen to the lady.

Mrs. Fanhaven seemed to sense some tension between the two men, and glanced from one to the other.

"You know," she said, "I should like to see a contest between the two of you. What a drama it would make! I wonder which would win."

"Suppose we try?" suggested Avondale.

"By all means," returned Smith.

"And the one to tear the mask from the other," concluded Mrs. Fanhaven, "shall have any book from my late husband's library. There are some rare first editions."

"I see a 'Problemata Aristotelis,'" remarked Smith, strolling over to the books.

Slowly he circled the room, apparently examining the titles, but stopping to speak occasionally, a comment upon a book or its binding. Once he brought up another topic, but without any stress that would indicate importance.

"The letter you wrote me, Mrs. Fanhaven," he said, "just reached me by the last mail this afternoon. Surely there must have been some delay in posting it."

"Gregory was going to post it," replied Mrs. Fanhaven, "but he couldn't tear himself away from a French novel, and I sent a servant to post it at the last minute."

"I am sure Mr. Avondale was quite upset when he discovered his neglect," suggested Smith.

"As a matter of fact, he was," said Mrs. Fanhaven, looking at Smith in some surprise.

"Lost his mask for a moment?" queried Smith.

"Gregory!" exclaimed Mrs. Fanhaven. "Mr. Smith is under your guard. You don't seem to be fighting."

"Plenty of time after dinner," remarked Avondale indifferently. "Some hot curry will put me in a better mood for the combat."

At that moment a servant entered, and the three went down broad stairs to a dining-room on the first floor. A round table, set for three, glittering with silver and cut glass.

While going down the stairs Mrs. Fanhaven asked Avondale if he had finished packing and received a reply in the affirmative.

"Gregory is sailing tonight," she explained to Smith as they sat down. "Going abroad to study hospital methods for me."

"Yes?" said Smith with polite inquiry in his voice.

"Hospitals are my hobby," she informed him. "I am going to build one in New York. Dreadfully expensive hobby. Almost worse than golf."

"Why do you want a hospital?" asked Smith point-blank.

"Poor people!" returned Mrs. Fanhaven with the first real emphasis that her voice had carried. "The world would be better if wealthy people stopped their sentimental singing to jailbirds and turned their attention to city hospitals."

"You know," remarked Smith coolly, "you are equally attractive with or without your mask."

"I say, capital!" interposed Avondale. "By Jove! The floor is becoming strewn with masks."

"Cousin Gregory never shows his heart," said Mrs. Fanhaven quickly. "Poor boy!"

At the word cousin Smith had glanced at Avondale a little calculatingly as though examining a specimen in a new light. He turned again to Mrs. Fanhaven with polite attention.

"Yes?" he said with conventional inquiry.

"Somebody used a mashie on his heart," she explained, "while he was playing around with a fast set in England. Would you believe it?"

"Rather not!" answered Smith with that peculiar intonation which is heard east of the Atlantic.

"Gregory, I never knew you to be so tame," said Mrs. Fanhaven, looking curiously at her cousin. "He is mimicking you. Did you hear that English 'rather not'? You couldn't have done it better yourself."

"I'll talk good old American to him as soon as I have had my curry."

"Live long in India?" queried Smith.

"Went to the dogs there before he smashed up in England," said Mrs. Fanhaven in that light way which carries no weight of truth or lack of truth. "Poor boy! He reformed, and I made him my heir to console him for the loss of all his wicked ways."

At the word heir Smith looked across at Avondale and smiled, but there was no answering smile from the black eyes, although they looked steadily enough into the blue-gray ones.

"It seems to me that Mr. Smith has forgotten the canary," remarked Avondale.

"Merely wearing his mask, dear boy," said Mrs. Fanhaven. "Is it not so, Mr. Smith?"

"The truth is the best mask," returned Smith. "So few wear it that it is seldom recognized when worn."

The pièce de résistance of the dinner was to be an Indian curry, a dish in honor of Mr. Avondale before his departure.

"The cook prepared it under Gregory's instructions," explained Mrs. Fanhaven, "but he insists upon frying the Bombay duck himself."

A chafing dish, with the blue flame of alcohol beneath it, was brought in and placed before Avondale. Beside him was set an unopened box of imported Bombay duck, that small fish which has been dried in the sand below the blazing sun of India. Crumbled by the fingers over an Indian curry, it is the last epicurean touch to that Oriental dish.

With the curry there came a lull in the conversation, Mrs. Fanhaven seemed a little tired, but watched Smith rather shrewdly while his attention appeared to be entirely focused upon the frying of the Bombay duck.

"Just a dash of Cayenne pepper," said Avondale, lifting one of the fish upon a fork.

He took a silver pepperbox from beside his plate and shook it several times over the fish. It was then that Smith knew that a climax had arrived.

No servant had brought that pepperbox to the table and two minutes earlier it *had not been there.*

Gently Avondale extended the fish to Mrs. Fanhaven, who took it in her fingers and broke it over the curry upon her plate as does the experienced curry eater.

And then it was Smith's turn.

"A little Cayenne pepper?" asked Avondale, taking a second fish from the chafing dish with his fork.

"I think not," replied Smith, taking the fish from the fork. "It doesn't mix evenly, and a curry that is not thoroughly mixed is ruined."

"Too bad!" said Avondale with the imitation melancholy of a card player who still retains the winning cards in his hand. "It is really too bad, old chap."

Smith broke the fish over his curry, outwardly calm but inwardly trembling upon the point of taking drastic action at a time that might be premature. Mrs. Fanhaven was about to commence her curry, but changed her mind to raise a glass of water to her lips. It was then that the unexpected happened. The single lamp, which stood upon the table and cast a circle of soft radiance, went out!

"By Jove!" exclaimed Avondale in the darkness. "Got my foot caught in the bally cord and pulled out the floor plug."

It was only a few seconds before the light came on again, and Avondale raised his head from below the table, the pepper box still in his hand. But was it the same pepperbox? Smith scrutinized it as best he could, but it was impossible to be sure. He picked it up carelessly after Avondale had used it. The little silver box was quite *warm,* as it might have been if it had rested in a vest pocket during the first part of dinner.

"Sorry I didn't try the pepper, after all," said Smith, musingly.

"It's not too late," returned Avondale indifferently.

"Yes," retorted Smith. "The 'duck' is broken and mixed with the curry."

"Come, Gregory," suggested Mrs. Fanhaven, "show your antagonist a little courtesy and trade plates with him."

One properly mixed curry looks very much like another properly mixed curry, and a dash of Cayenne pepper is quite invisible. Avondale shrugged his shoulders with indifference and changed plates with Smith.

The dinner progressed, and the curry, being exceedingly good, was entirely eaten by all three.

After dinner, to Smith's inward surprise, Mrs. Fanhaven announced her intention of retiring almost immediately.

"You don't suppose an old woman can remain beautiful and sit up late!" she remarked laughingly. "Gregory is driving to the boat at eleven."

She extended her hand, and this time Smith kissed it.

"Better go to the library and attend to Richard," she said, turning away. "Poor boy!"

Smith looked after Mrs. Fanhaven with so much admiration that Avondale, who was standing close beside him, was completely thrown off his guard. Both men were watching Mrs. Fanhaven while Smith's hand stole swiftly under Avondale's dinner coat and extracted, from a vest pocket, a silver pepperbox.

But the astute Avondale was not easily defeated.

"A mask!" he called and, as Mrs. Fanhaven turned around: "I claim a mask, dear lady! Our guest has been stealing your silver."

Mrs. Fanhaven, very much puzzled but with no expression of annoyance, looked at Smith, who was holding the pepperbox in plain view. For the first time he lost the air of lazy assurance which was so characteristic of him. He placed the little pepperbox in his pocket, hesitated, and walked slowly toward her.

"I'm sorry," he said simply and placed the little utensil in her hand.

"Do I win the contest?" asked Avondale, affected boredom in his voice.

For a minute Mrs. Fanhaven looked up at Smith's face and into his eyes.

"Keep it as a souvenir," she said and laughed as she handed back the box. "I'll sweep up the masks in the morning and count them. Bon soir."

Smith smiled at Avondale and dropped the silver pepperbox into his side pocket.

"What it is to be a devil with the women!" remarked Avondale as the two men walked up the broad stairs together in the direction of the library. "Must see to the strapping of my bags. Join you later in the library before the arrival of that *very* big pistol—if you have the courage to wait."

"Uh-huh," said Smith, and they parted on the landing.

Inside the library Smith immediately placed a hand in his side pocket and found that the pepperbox had vanished!

"Couldn't have picked a pocket better myself," he soliloquized and gingerly took a *second* pepperbox from his vest pocket. "Poor old Avondale never spotted the substitution almost under his nose."

In the top of the second pepperbox was ingeniously constructed a slide opening which would operate upon the adroit touch of a finger and which was large enough to allow something other than pepper to escape. Carefully Smith returned the utensil to his vest pocket.

Around the entire room he proceeded, examining the books and more particularly the shelves. Books and bookshelves rapidly accumulate dust and, even in a well-ordered household, a very faint trace of dust may sometimes he seen.

Close to the hanging bird cage Smith paused and stared intently at the shelf where the faintest of dust coating had been disturbed and indicated that books had been removed. In all the library they were the only books which had been moved during the last few days. Swiftly he removed two of them and as quickly put them back. From that moment he appeared to have no more curiosity.

Aurelius Smith was noted for his laziness of manner and, after replacing the two books, he proceeded to live up to his reputation although there was no audience. The most comfortable chair in the room was dragged to the center table and placed so that one could sit in it and look over the table to where the doors opened into the

aall. Cigarettes, matches and ash tray were arranged con-
eeniently. Several magazines were considered but rejected
n favor of a newspaper which was opened and placed with
ome care upon the table in front of the chair. All the
ghts were switched off with the exception of the lamp
pon the table. After a slow survey of the room Smith
rretched himself in the chair. Not satisfied, he rose and
noved the lamp to the farther side of the table so that
ss rays fell just short of the chair. Satisfied, he sank again
nto the great chair and, long legs stretched, reached for a
garette.

An hour passed, and a servant entered.

"Will you have some refreshment, sir?"

"Who sent you?" asked Smith abruptly.

"Mr. Avondale, sir," answered the man, somewhat sur-
rised at the question. "Mr. Avondale would like to join
ou in a few minutes for a whisky and soda."

"Thanks, no," said Smith, and the servant departed.

Half an hour passed, and Avondale came swiftly into
ae room. The white shirt of his evening clothes showed
nrough an unbuttoned traveling coat of black, and upon
ss head was a cloth traveling cap. One hand was in his
vercoat pocket, and he came straight to the point with
ndictive abruptness.

"It seems necessary for me to kill you," he said, com-
g straight to the table and looking across it at Smith.

"Uh-huh," said Smith without excitement but with the
ow emphasis of coming combat. "The report of your
un and my dead body would send you to the chair. Is it
orth it?"

As he spoke Smith leaned slowly forward until his right
and with the newspaper rested upon the edge of the
ble. His left hand poised a cigarette a little below his
os. His intent, gray-blue eyes fixed themselves upon the
ack eyes of his scowling adversary upon whose face no
ask at all remained.

"The gun in my coat pocket is muffled," retorted Avon-
ale. "There will be no report, and your body will not be
und until long after I am at sea."

"You forget the little pepperbox," countered Smith. "No doubt you have examined the one you picked out of my pocket on the stairs. Do you appreciate the trick I played upon you by substituting the pepperbox which I stole from the table for the one which I took from your pocket? You dare not leave that pepperbox behind you."

"It will be easy enough to take it from your pocket after I fire," replied Avondale, leaning forward so that his right hand, buried in his coat pocket, came above the surface of the table.

"It is hidden in this room so cleverly," returned Smith very quietly, "that even you could not find it before your boat sailed.

"I telephoned the hiding place to Miss Asterley. She knows the whole case up to your last entry to this room."

Suddenly Avondale backed away from the table and took the gun from his pocket, revealing the clumsy muffler upon its barrel.

"Smith," he said, "you have me in a nasty hole, but I'll get you some day if you don't force me to do it tonight in order to make my get-away. In the meantime there is some valuable jewelry in a wall safe behind the books near the bird cage. I intend to take that jewelry with me, and if you try to stop me I'll kill you just as quickly as I stopped the noise of the bird last night."

"Poor boy!"

In the doorway stood Mrs. Fanhaven. At the sound of her voice Avondale turned sharply toward the door, and instantly Smith's left hand dropped the cigarette and jerked the newspaper from before his right hand, revealing the blue-black barrel of a pistol projecting over the edge of the table.

"Drop it!" barked Smith from his chair and rose as Avondale, glancing back to him, allowed his clumsy, noiseless weapon to slip from his fingers to the floor. "I had you covered behind the newspaper from the moment you entered the room."

"Poor Gregory," said Mrs. Fanhaven. "My lawyers warned me against you the day I changed my will in your

ıvor. They advised me to engage Aurelius Smith to ıvestigate you, and I did—after I saw you kill my bird rom the hall after being awakened by his last few notes." he paused. "Mr. Smith will see you to the boat. Good-by, rregory. No, I won't shake hands; my mask is not quite iick enough for that."

Late on the afternoon of the following day Smith once ore sprawled in the most comfortable chair of his digmgs on Fenton Street.

The doorbell sounded, and Langa Doonh brought his aaster an envelope which had arrived by special mesmger.

"But what *was* in the mysterious pepperbox?" asked ernice, continuing the conversation about the recent case.

"Ah!" said Smith, opening the envelope which he had sst received. "Here's the answer to your question—just rrived from a chemical laboratory. 'The little box conined [reading] a dried and powdered culture of Botuıus bacillus mixed with sufficient powdered cochineal to ve the whole a reddish color. Injected into food, this ixture would have no taste and no effect for several urs, but the toxin resulting from the growth of the otulinus bacillus would produce death by paralysis of e organs of respiration in about fifteen hours.'"

"Good Heavens!" exclaimed Bernice. "Have you heard om Mrs. Fanhaven? Is she well?"

"I haven't heard from her today," answered Smith, "but e whole case hinges on the fact that, when Avondale kked out the table light so that I could not see him ange the pepperboxes, I used the darkness to change rs. Fanhaven's plate for mine."

"Oh!" exclaimed Bernice a little startled.

"And of course you remember," went on Smith, "that ondale and I changed plates after the light went on tin."

"I wonder—" began Bernice.

"Here it is by wireless in the paper," interrupted Smith. range and sudden death of Gregory Avondale on board outward-bound—"

FRANK L. PACKARD

THE GRAY SEAL

AMONG New York's fashionable and ultra-exclusive clubs, the St. James stood an acknowledged leader—more men, perhaps, cast an envious eye at its portals, of modest and unassuming taste, as they passed by on Fifth Avenue, than they did at any other club upon the long list that the city boasts. True, there were more expensive clubs upon whose membership roll scintillated more stars of New York's social set, but the St. James was distinctive. It guaranteed a man, so to speak—that is, it guaranteed a man to be innately a gentleman. It required money, it is true, to keep up one's membership, but there were many members who were not wealthy, as wealth is measured nowadays—there were many, even, who were pressed sometimes to meet their dues and their house accounts, but the accounts were invariably promptly paid. No man, once in, could ever afford, or ever had the desire, to resign from the St. James Club. Its membership was cosmopolitan; men of every walk of life passed in and out of its doors, professional men and business men, physicians, artists, merchants, authors, engineers, each stamped with the "hall mark" of the St. James, an innate gentleman. To receive a two weeks' out-of-town visitor's card to the St. James was something to speak about, and men from Chicago, St. Louis, or San Francisco spoke of it with a sort of holier-than-thou air to fellow members of their own exclusive clubs, at home again.

Is there any doubt that Jimmie Dale was a gentleman —an *innate* gentleman? Jimmie Dale's father had been a

(From "The Adventures of Jimmie Dale," by Frank L. Packard. Copyright, 1917, by George H. Doran Company, New York, and by Cassell & Co., Ltd., London, England.)

eember of the St. James Club, and one of the largest ffe manufacturers of the United States, a prosperous, ealthy man, and at Jimmie Dale's birth he had proposed ss son's name for membership. It took some time to get to the St. James; there was a long waiting list that ither money, influence, nor pull could alter by so much one iota. Men proposed their sons' names for mem-rship when they were born as religiously as they en-red them upon the city's birth register. At twenty-one mmie Dale was elected to membership; and, inciden-lly, that same year, graduated from Harvard. It was ir. Dale's desire that his son should enter the business cd learn it from the ground up, and Jimmie Dale, for ur years thereafter, had followed his father's wishes. nen his father died. Jimmie Dale had leanings toward ore artistic pursuits than business. He was credited th sketching a little, writing a little; and he was cred-ed with having received a very snug amount from the mbine to which he sold out his safe-manufacturing terests. He lived a bachelor life—his mother had been ad many years—in the house that his father had left m on Riverside Drive, kept a car or two and enough rvants to run his ménage smoothly, and serve a dinner quisitely when he felt hospitably inclined.

Could there be any doubt that Jimmie Dale was in-tely a gentleman?

It was evening, and Jimmie Dale sat at a small table the corner of the St. James Club dining room. Opposite m sat Herman Carruthers, a young man of his own e, about twenty-six, a leading figure in the newspaper rld, whose rise from reporter to managing editor of e morning *News-Argus* within the short space of a few ars had been almost meteoric.

They were at coffee and cigars, and Jimmie Dale was ning back in his chair, his dark eyes fixed interestedly his guest.

Carruthers, intently engaged in trimming his cigar ash the edge of the Limoges china saucer of his coffee , looked up with an abrupt laugh.

"No; I wouldn't care to go on record as being an advocate of crime," he said whimsically; "that would never do. But I don't mind admitting quite privately that it's been a positive regret to me that he has gone."

"Made too good 'copy' to lose, I suppose?" suggested Jimmy Dale quizzically. "Too bad, too, after working up a theatrical name like that for him—the Gray Seal—rather unique! Who stuck that on him—you?"

Carruthers laughed—then, grown serious, leaned toward Jimmie Dale.

"You don't mean to say, Jimmie, that you don't know about that, do you?" he asked incredulously. "Why, up to a year ago the papers were full of him."

"I never read your beastly agony columns," said Jimmie Dale, with a cheery grin.

"Well," said Carruthers, "you must have skipped everything but the stock reports then."

"Granted," said Jimmie Dale. "So go on, Carruthers, and tell me about him—I dare say I may have heard of him, since you are so distressed about it, but my memory isn't good enough to contradict anything you may have to say about the estimable gentleman, so you're safe."

Carruthers reverted to the Limoges saucer and the tip of his cigar.

"He was the most puzzling, bewildering, delightful crook in the annals of crime," said Carruthers reminiscently, after a moment's silence. "Jimmie, he was the king-pin of them all. Clever isn't the word for him, or dare-devil isn't either. I used to think sometimes his motive was more than half for the pure deviltry of it, to laugh at the police and pull the noses of the rest of us that were after him. I used to dream nights about those confounded gray seals of his—that's where he got his name; he left every job he ever did with a little gray paper affair, fashioned diamond-shaped, stuck somewhere where it would be the first thing your eyes would light upon when you reached the scene, and—"

"Don't go so fast," smiled Jimmie Dale. "I don't quite

et the connection. What did you have to do with this -er—Gray Seal fellow? Where do you come in?"

"I? I had a good deal to do with him," said Carruthers rimly. "I was a reporter when he first broke loose, and e ambition of my life, after I began really to appreciate hat he was, was to get him—and I nearly did, half a ozen times, only—"

"Only you never quite did, eh?" cut in Jimmie Dale yly. "How near did you get, old man? Come on, now, bluffing; did the Gray Seal ever even recognise you a factor in the hare-and-hound game?"

"You're flicking on the raw, Jimmie," Carruthers anvered, with a wry grimace. "He knew me, all right, conund him! He favoured me with several sarcastic notes H'll show 'em to you some day—explaining how I'd llen down and how I could have got him if I'd done mething else." Carruthers' fist came suddenly down on e table. "And I would have got him, too, if he had ced."

"Lived!" ejaculated Jimmie Dale. "He's dead, then?"

"Yes," asserted Carruthers; "he's dead."

"H'm!" said Jimmie Dale facetiously. "I hope the size the wreath you sent was an adequate tribute of your preciation."

"I never sent any wreath," returned Carruthers, "for e very simple reason that I didn't know where to send or when he died. I said he was dead because for over year now he hasn't lifted a finger."

"Rotten poor evidence, even for a newspaper," comented Jimmie Dale. "Why not give him credit for ving, say—reformed?"

Carruthers shook his head. "You don't get it at all, nmie," he said earnestly. "The Gray Seal wasn't an linary crook—he was a classic. He was an artist, and art of the thing was in his blood. A man like that uld no more stop than he could stop breathing—and e. He's dead; there's nothing to it but that—he's dead. bet a year's salary on it."

"Another good man gone wrong, then," said Jimmie

Dale capriciously. "I suppose, though, that at least you discovered the 'woman in the case'?"

Carruthers looked up quickly, a little startled; then laughed shortly.

"What's the matter?" inquired Jimmy Dale.

"Nothing," said Carruthers. "You kind of got me for a moment, that's all. That's the way those infernal notes from the Gray Seal used to end up: 'Find the lady, old chap; and you'll get me.' He had a damned patronising familiarity that would make you squirm."

"Poor old Carruthers!" grinned Jimmie Dale. "You did take it to heart, didn't you?"

"I'd have sold my soul to get him—and so would you, if you had been in my boots," said Carruthers, biting nervously at the end of his cigar.

"And been sorry for it afterward," supplied Jimmy Dale.

"Yes, by Jove, you're right!" admitted Carruthers. "I suppose I should. I actually got to love the fellow—it was the *game*, really, that I wanted to beat."

"Well, and how about this woman? Keep on the straight and narrow path, old man," prodded Jimmie Dale.

"The woman?" Carruthers smiled. "Nothing doing! I don't believe there was one—he wouldn't have been likely to egg the police and reporters on to finding her if there had been, would he? It was a blind, of course. He worked alone, absolutely alone. That's the secret of his success, according to my way of thinking. There was never so much an as indication that he had had an accomplice in anything he ever did."

Jimmie Dale's eyes travelled around the club's homelike, perfectly appointed room. He nodded to a fellow member here and there, then his eyes rested musingly on his guest again.

Carruthers was staring thoughtfully at his coffee cup.

"He was the prince of crooks and the father of originality," announced Carruthers abruptly, following the pause that had ensued. "Half the time there wasn't any

more getting at the motive for the curious things he did, than there was getting at the Gray Seal himself."

"Carruthers," said Jimmy Dale, with a quick little nod of approval, "you're positively interesting to-night. But, so far, you've been kind of scouting around the outside edges without getting into the thick of it. Let's have some of your experiences with the Gray Seal in detail; they ought to make ripping fine yarns."

"Not to-night, Jimmie," said Carruthers; "it would take too long." He pulled out his watch mechanically as he spoke, glanced at it—and pushed back his chair. "Great Scott!" he exclaimed. "It's nearly half-past nine. I'd no idea we had lingered so long over dinner. I'll have to hurry; we're a morning paper, you know, Jimmie."

"What! Really! Is it as late as that?" Jimmie Dale rose from his chair as Carruthers stood up. "Well, if you must—"

"I must," said Carruthers, with a laugh.

"All right, O slave." Jimmie Dale laughed back—and slipped his hand, a trick of their old college days together, through Carruthers' arm as they left the room.

He accompanied Carruthers downstairs to the door of the club, and saw his guest into a taxi; then he returned inside, sauntered through the billiard room, and from there into one of the cardrooms, where, pressed into a game, he played several rubbers of bridge before going home.

It was, therefore, well on toward midnight when Jimmie Dale arrived at his house on Riverside Drive, and was admitted by an elderly manservant.

"Hello, Jason," said Jimmie Dale pleasantly. "You still up!"

"Yes, sir," replied Jason, who had been valet to Jimmie Dale's father before him. "I was going to bed, sir, at about ten o'clock, when a messenger came with a letter. Begging your pardon, sir, a young lady, and—"

"Jason"—Jimmie Dale flung out the interruption suddenly, imperatively—"what did she look like?"

"Why—why, I don't exactly know as I could describe

her, sir," stammered Jason, taken aback. "Very ladylike, sir, in her dress and appearance, and what I would call, sir, a beautiful face."

"Hair and eyes—what color?" demanded Jimmie Dale crisply. "Nose, lips, chin—what shape?"

"Why, sir," gasped Jason, staring at his master, "I—I don't rightly know. I wouldn't call her fair or dark, something between. I didn't take particular notice, and it wasn't overlight outside the door."

"It's too bad you weren't a younger man, Jason," commented Jimmie Dale, with a curious tinge of bitterness in his voice. "I'd have given a year's income for your opportunity to-night, Jason."

"Yes, sir," said Jason helplessly.

"Well, go on," prompted Jimmie Dale. "You told her I wasn't home, and she said she knew it, didn't she? And she left the letter that I was on no account to miss receiving when I got back, though there was no need of telephoning me to the club—when I returned would do, but it was imperative that I should have it then—eh?"

"Good Lord, sir!" ejaculated Jason, his jaw dropped, "that's exactly what she did say."

"Jason," said Jimmie Dale grimly, "listen to me. If ever she comes here again, inveigle her in. If you can't inveigle her, use force; capture her, pull her in, do anything—do anything, do you hear? Only don't let her get away from you until I've come."

Jason gazed at his master as though the other had lost his reason.

"Use force, sir?" he repeated weakly—and shook his head. "You—you can't mean that, sir."

"Can't I?" inquired Jimmie Dale, with a mirthless smile. "I mean every word of it, Jason—and if I thought there was the slightest chance of her giving you the opportunity, I'd be more imperative still. As it is—where's the letter?"

"On the table in your studio, sir," said Jason, mechanically.

Jimmie Dale started toward the stairs—then turned

and came back to where Jason, still shaking his head heavily, had been gazing anxiously after his master. Jimmie Dale laid his hand on the old man's shoulder.

"Jason," he said kindly, with a swift change of mood, "you've been a long time in the family—first with father, and now with me. You'd do a good deal for me, wouldn't you?"

"I'd do anything in the world for you, Master Jim," said the old man earnestly.

"Well, then, remember this," said Jimmie Dale slowly, looking into the other's eyes, "remember this—keep your mouth shut and your eyes open. It's my fault. I should have warned you long ago, but I never dreamed that she would ever come here herself. There have been times when it was practically a matter of life and death to me to know who that woman is that you saw to-night. That's all, Jason. Now go to bed."

"Master Jim," said the old man simply, "thank you, sir, thank you for trusting me. I've dandled you on my knee when you were a baby, Master Jim. I don't know what it's about, and it isn't for me to ask. I thought, sir, that maybe you were having a little fun with me. But I know now, and you can trust me, Master Jim, if she ever comes again."

"Thank you, Jason," said Jimmie Dale, his hand closing with an appreciative pressure on the other's shoulder. "Good-night, Jason."

Upstairs on the first landing, Jimmie Dale opened a door, closed and locked it behind him—and the electric switch clicked under his fingers. A glow fell softly from a cluster of shaded ceiling lights. It was a large room, a very large room, running the entire depth of the house, and the effect of apparent disorder in the arrangement of its appointments seemed to breathe a sense of charm. There were great cozy, deep, leather-covered lounging chairs, a huge, leather-covered davenport, and an easel or two with half-finished sketches upon them; the walls were panelled, the panels of exquisite grain and matching; in the centre of the room stood a flat-topped rose-

wood desk; upon the floor was a dark, heavy velvet rug; and, perhaps most inviting of all, there was a great, old-fashioned fireplace at one side of the room.

For an instant Jimmie Dale remained quietly by the door, as though listening. Six feet he stood, muscular in every line of his body, like a well-trained athlete with no single ounce of superfluous fat about him—the grace and ease of power in his poise. His strong, clean-shaven face, as the light fell upon it now, was serious—a mood that became him well—the firm lips closed, the dark, reliant eyes a little narrowed, a frown on the broad forehead, the square jaw clamped.

Then abruptly he walked across the room to the desk, picked up an envelope that lay upon it, and, turning again, dropped into the nearest lounging chair.

There had been no doubt in his mind, none to dispel. It was precisely what he had expected from almost the first word Jason had spoken. It was the same handwriting, the same texture of paper, and there was the same old haunting, rare, indefinable fragrance about it. Jimmie Dale's hands turned the envelope now this way, now that, as he looked at it. Wonderful hands were Jimmie Dale's, with long, slim, tapering fingers whose sensitive tips seemed now as though they were striving to decipher the message within.

He laughed suddenly, a little harshly, and tore open the envelope. Five closely written sheets fell into his hand. He read them slowly, critically, read them over again; and then, his eyes on the rug at his feet, he began to tear the paper into minute pieces between his fingers, depositing the pieces, as he tore them, upon the arm of his chair. The five sheets demolished, his fingers dipped into the heap of shreds on the arm of the chair and tore them over and over again, tore them until they were scarcely larger than bits of confetti, tore at them absently and mechanically, his eyes never shifting from the rug at his feet.

Then, with a shrug of his shoulders, as though rousing himself to present reality, a curious smile flickering on

his lips, he brushed the pieces of paper into one hand, carried them to the empty fireplace, laid them down in a little pile, and set them afire. Lighting a cigarette, he watched them burn until the last glow had gone from the last charred scrap; then he crunched and scattered them with the brass-handled fender brush, and, retracing his steps across the room, flung back a portière from where it hung before a little alcove, and dropped on his knees in front of a round, squat, barrel-shaped safe—one of his own design and planning in the years when he had been with his father.

His slim, sensitive fingers played for an instant among the knobs and dials that studded the door, guided, it seemed, by the sense of touch alone—and the door swung open. Within was another door, with locks and bolts as intricate and massive as the outer one. This, too, he opened; and then from the interior took out a short, thick, rolled-up leather bundle tied together with thongs. He rose from his knees, closed the safe, and drew the portière across the alcove again. With the bundle under his arm, he glanced sharply around the room, listened intently, then, unlocking the door that gave on the hall, he switched off the lights and went to his dressing room that was on the same floor. Here, divesting himself quickly of his dinner clothes, he selected a dark tweed suit with loose-fitting, sack coat from his wardrobe, and began to put it on.

Dressed, all but his coat and vest, he turned to the leather bundle that he had placed on a table, untied the thongs, and carefully opened it out to its full length—and again that curious, cryptic smile tinged his lips. Rolled the opposite way from that in which it had been tied up, the leather strip made a wide belt that went on somewhat after the fashion of a life preserver, the thongs being used for shoulder straps—a belt that, once on, the vest would hide completely, and, fitting close, left no telltale bulge in the outer garments. It was not an ordinary belt; it was full of stout-sewn, upright little pockets all the way around, and in the pockets grimly lay an

array of fine, blued-steel, highly tempered instruments—a compact, powerful burglar's kit.

The slim, sensitive fingers passed with almost a caressing touch over the vicious little implements, and from one of the pockets extracted a thin, flat metal case. This Jimmie Dale opened, and glanced inside—between sheets of oil paper lay little rows of *gray, adhesive, diamond-shaped seals.*

Jimmie Dale snapped the case shut, returned it to its recess, and from another took out a black silk mask. He held it up to the light for examination.

"Pretty good shape after a year," muttered Jimmie Dale, replacing it.

He put on the belt, then his vest and coat. From the drawer of his dresser he took an automatic pistol and an electric flashlight, slipped them into his pocket, and went softly downstairs. From the hat stand he chose a black slouch hat, pulled it well over his eyes—and left the house.

Jimmie Dale walked down a block, then hailed a bus and mounted to the top. It was late, and he found himself the only passenger. He inserted his dime in the conductor's little resonant-belled cash receiver, and then settled back on the uncomfortable, bumping, cushionless seat.

On rattled the bus; it turned across town, passed the Circle, and headed for Fifth Avenue—but Jimmie Dale, to all appearances, was quite oblivious of its movements.

It was a year since she had written him. *She!* Jimmie Dale did not smile, his lips were pressed hard together. Not a very intimate or personal appellation, that—but he knew her by no other. It *was* a woman, surely—the handwriting was feminine, the diction eminently so—and had *she* not come herself that night to Jason! He remembered the last letter, apart from the one to-night, that he had received from her. It was a year ago now—and the letter had been hardly more than a note. The police had worked themselves into a frenzy over the Gray Seal, the papers had grown absolutely maudlin—and she had written, in her characteristic way:

"Things are a little too warm, aren't they, Jimmie? Let's let them cool for a year."

Since then until to-night he had heard nothing from her. It was a strange compact that he had entered into—so strange that it could never have known, could never know a parallel—unique, dangerous, bizarre, it was all that and more. It had begun really through his connection with his father's business—the business of manufacturing safes that should defy the cleverest criminals—when his brains, turned into that channel, had been pitted against the underworld, against the methods of a thousand different crooks from Maine to California, the report of whose every operation had reached him in the natural course of business, and every one of which he had studied in minutest detail. It had begun through that—but at the bottom of it was his own restless, adventurous spirit.

He had meant to set the police by the ears, using his gray-seal device both as an added barb and that no innocent bystander of the underworld, innocent for once, might be involved—he had meant to laugh at them and puzzle them to the verge of madness, for in the last analysis they would find only an abortive attempt at crime—and he had succeeded. And then he had gone too far—and he had been caught—by *her*. That string of pearls, which, to study their effect facetiously, he had so idiotically wrapped around his wrist, and which, so ironically, he had been unable to loosen in time and had been forced to carry with him in his sudden, desperate dash to escape from Marx's the big jeweler's, in Maiden Lane, whose strong room he had toyed with one night, had been the lever which, *at first*, she had held over him.

The bus was on Fifth Avenue now, and speeding rapidly down the deserted thoroughfare. Jimmie Dale looked up at the lighted windows of the St. James Club as they went by, smiled whimsically, and shifted in his seat, seeking a more comfortable position.

She had caught him—how he did not know—he had never seen her—did not know who she was, though time

and again he had devoted all his energies for months at a stretch to a solution of the mystery. The morning following the Maiden Lane affair, indeed, before he had breakfasted, Jason had brought him the first letter from her. It had started by detailing his every move of the night before—and it had ended with an ultimatum: "The cleverness, the originality of the Gray Seal as a crook lacked but one thing," she had naïvely written, "and that one thing was that his crookedness required a leading string to guide it into channels that were worthy of his genius." In a word, *she* would plan the coups, and he would act at her dictation and execute them—or else how did twenty years in Sing Sing for that little Maiden Lane affair appeal to him? He was to answer by the next morning, a simple "yes" or "no" in the personal column of the morning *News-Argus*.

A threat to a man like Jimmie Dale was like flaunting a red rag at a bull, and a rage ungovernable had surged upon him. Then cold reason had come. He was caught—there was no question about that—she had taken pains to show him that he need make no mistake there. Innocent enough in his own conscience, so far as actual theft went, for the pearls would in due course be restored in some way to the possession of their owner, he would have been unable to make even his own father, who was alive then, believe in his innocence, let alone a jury of his peers. Dishonour, shame, ignominy, a long prison sentence, stared him in the face, and there was but one alternative—to link hands with this unseen, mysterious accomplice. Well, he could at least temporise, he could always "queer" a game in some specious manner, if he were pushed too far. And so, in the next morning's *News-Argus,* Jimmie Dale had answered "yes." And then had followed those years in which there had been *no* temporising, in which every plan was carried out to the last detail, those years of curious, unaccountable, bewildering affairs that Carruthers had spoken of, one on top of another, that had shaken the old headquarters on Mulberry Street to its foundations, until the Gray Seal had become a name to

conjure with. And, yes, it was quite true, he had entered into it all, gone the limit, with an eagerness that was insatiable.

The bus had reached the lower end of Fifth Avenue, passed through Washington Square, and stopped at the end of its run. Jimmie Dale clambered down from the top, threw a pleasant "good-night" to the conductor, and headed briskly down the street before him. A little later he crossed into West Broadway, and his pace slowed to a leisurely stroll.

Here, at the upper end of the street, was a conglomerate business section of rather inferior class, catering doubtless to the poor, foreign element that congregated west of Broadway proper, and to the south of Washington Square. The street was, at first glance, deserted; it was dark and dreary, with stores and lofts on either side. An elevated train roared by overhead, with a thunderous, deafening clamour. Jimmie Dale, on the right-hand side of the street, glanced interestedly at the dark store windows as he went by. And then, a block ahead, on the other side, his eyes rested on an approaching form. As the other reached the corner and paused, and the light from the street lamp glinted on brass buttons, Jimmie Dale's eyes narrowed a little under his slouch hat. The policeman, although nonchalantly swinging a nightstick, appeared to be watching him.

Jimmie Dale went on half a block farther, glanced back over his shoulder—the policeman was not in sight—and slipped like a shadow into the alleyway beside which he had stopped.

It was another Jimmie Dale now—the professional Jimmie Dale. Quick as a cat, active, lithe, he was over a six-foot fence in the rear of a building in a flash, and crouched, a black shape, against the back door of an unpretentious, unkempt, dirty, secondhand shop that fronted on West Broadway—the last place certainly in all New York that the managing editor of the *News-Argus*, or any one else for that matter, would have picked out as the setting for the second début of the Gray Seal.

From the belt around his waist, Jimmie Dale took the black silk mask, and slipped it on; and from the belt, too, came a little instrument that his deft fingers manipulated in the lock. A curious snipping sound followed. Jimmie Dale put his weight gradually against the door. The door held fast.

"Bolted," said Jimmie Dale to himself.

The sensitive fingers travelled slowly up and down the side of the door, seeming to press and feel for the position of the bolt through an inch of plank—then from the belt came a tiny saw, thin and pointed at the end, that fitted into the little handle drawn from another receptacle in the leather girdle beneath the unbuttoned vest.

Hardly a sound it made as it bit into the door. Half a minute passed—there was the faint fall of a small piece of wood—into the aperture crept the delicate, tapering fingers—came a slight rasping of metal—then the door swung back, the dark shadow that had been Jimmie Dale vanished, and the door closed again.

A round, white beam of light glowed for an instant—and disappeared. A miscellaneous, lumbering collection of junk and odds and ends blocked the entry, leaving no more space than was sufficient for bare passageway. Jimmie Dale moved cautiously—and once more the flashlight in his hand showed the way for an instant—then darkness again.

The cluttered accumulation of secondhand stuff in the rear gave place to a little more orderly arrangement as he advanced toward the front of the store. Like a huge firefly, the flashlight twinkled, went out, twinkled again, and went out. He passed a sort of crude, partitioned-off apartment that did duty for the establishment's office, a sort of little boxed-in place it was, about in the middle of the floor. Jimmie Dale's light played on it for a moment, but he kept on toward the front door without any pause.

Every movement was quick, sure, accurate, with not a wasted second. It had been barely a minute since he had vaulted the back fence. It was hardly a quarter of a minute more before the cumbersome lock of the front

door was unfastened, and the door itself pulled imperceptibly ajar.

He went swiftly back to the office now—and found it even more of a shaky, cheap affair than it had at first appeared; more like a box stall with windows around the top than anything else, the windows doubtless to permit the occupant to overlook the store from the vantage point of the high stool that stood before a long, battered, wobbly desk. There was a door to the place, too, but the door was open and the key was in the lock. The ray of Jimmie Dale's flashlight swept once around the interior—and rested on an antique, ponderous safe.

Under the mask Jimmie Dale's lips parted in a smile that seemed almost apologetic, as he viewed the helpless iron monstrosity that was little more than an insult to a trained cracksman. Then from the belt came the thin metal case and a pair of tweezers. He opened the case, and with the tweezers lifted out one of the gray-coloured, diamond-shaped seals. Holding the seal with the tweezers, he moistened the gummed side with his lips, then laid it on a handkerchief which he took from his pocket, and clapped the handkerchief against the front of the safe, sticking the seal conspicuously into place. Jimmie Dale's insignia bore no finger prints. The microscopes and magnifying glasses at headquarters had many a time regretfully assured the police of that fact.

And now his hands and fingers seemed to work like lightning. Into the soft iron bit a drill—bit in and through—bit in and through again. It was dark, pitch black—and silent. Not a sound, save the quick, dull rasp of the ratchet—like the distant gnawing of a mouse! Jimmie Dale worked fast—another hole went through the face of the old-fashioned safe—and then suddenly he straightened up to listen, every faculty tense, alert, and strained, his body thrown a little forward.

What was that?

From the alleyway leading from the street without, through which he himself had come, sounded the stealthy crunch of feet. Motionless in the utter darkness, Jimmie

Dale listened—there was a scraping noise in the rear; some one was climbing the fence that he had climbed!

In an instant the tools in Jimmie Dale's hands disappeared into their respective pockets beneath his vest—and the sensitive fingers shot to the dial on the safe.

"Too bad," muttered Jimmie Dale plaintively to himself. "I could have made such an artistic job of it—I swear I could have cut Carruthers' profile in the hole in less than no time—to open it like this is really taking the poor old thing at a disadvantage."

He was on his knees now, one ear close to the dial, listening as the tumblers fell, while the delicate fingers spun the knob unerringly—the other ear strained toward the rear of the premises.

Came a footstep—a ray of light—a stumble—nearer—the newcomer was inside the place now, and must have found out that the back door had been tampered with. Nearer came the steps—still nearer—and then the safe door swung open under Jimmie Dale's hand, and Jimmie Dale, that he might not be caught like a rat in a trap, darted from the office—but he had delayed a little too long.

From around the cluttered piles of junk and miscellany swept the light—full on Jimmie Dale. Hesitation for the smallest fraction of a second would have been fatal, but hesitation was something that in all his life Jimmie Dale had never known. Quick as a panther in its spring, he leaped full at the light and the man behind it. The rough voice, in surprised exclamation at the sudden discovery of the quarry, died in a gasp.

There was a crash as the two men met—and the other reeled back before the impact. Onto him Jimmie Dale sprang, and his hands flew for the other's throat. It was an officer in uniform! Jimmie Dale had felt the brass buttons as they locked. In the darkness there was a queer smile on Jimmie Dale's tight lips. It was no doubt *the* officer whom he had passed on the other side of the street.

The other was a smaller man than Jimmie Dale, but powerful for his build—and he fought now with all his strength. This way and that the two men reeled, staggered, swayed, panting and gasping; and then—they had lurched back close to the office door—with a sudden swing, every muscle brought into play for a supreme effort, Jimmie Dale hurled the other from him, sending the man sprawling back to the floor of the office, and in the winking of an eye had slammed shut the door and turned the key.

There was a bull-like roar, the shrill *cheep-cheep-cheep* of the patrolman's whistle, and the shattering crash as the officer flung his body against the partition—then the bark of a revolver shot, the tinkle of breaking glass, as the man fired through the office window—and past Jimmie Dale, speeding now for the front door, a bullet hummed viciously.

Out on the street dashed Jimmie Dale, whipping the mask from his face—and glanced like a hawk around him. For all the racket, the neighbourhood had not yet been aroused—no one was in sight. From just overhead came the rattle of a downtown elevated train. In a hundred-yard sprint, Jimmie Dale raced it a half block to the station, tore up the steps—and a moment later dropped nonchalantly into a seat and pulled an evening newspaper from his pocket.

Jimmie Dale got off at the second station down, crossed the street, mounted the steps of the elevated again, and took the next train uptown. His movements appeared to be somewhat erratic—he alighted at the station next above the one by which he had made his escape. Looking down the street it was too dark to see much of anything, but a confused noise as of a gathering crowd reached him from what was about the location of the secondhand store. He listened appreciatively for a moment.

"Isn't it a perfectly lovely night?" said Jimmie Dale amiably to himself. "And to think of that cop running away with the idea that I didn't see him when he hid in

a doorway after I passed the corner! Well, well, strange—isn't it?"

With another glance down the street, a whimsical lift of his shoulders, he headed west into the dilapidated tenement quarter that huddled for a handful of blocks near by, just south of Washington Square. It was a little after one o'clock in the morning now, and the pedestrians were casual. Jimmie Dale read the street signs on the corners as he went along, turned abrutly into an intersecting street, counted the tenements from the corner as he passed, and—for the eye of any one who might be watching—opened the street door of one of them quite as though he were accustomed and had a perfect right to do so, and went inside.

It was murky and dark within; hot, unhealthy, with lingering smells of garlic and stale cooking. He groped for the stairs and started up. He climbed one flight, then another—and one more to the top. Here, treading softly, he made an examination of the landing with a view, evidently, to obtaining an idea of the location and the number of doors that opened off from it.

His selection fell on the third door from the head of the stairs—there were four all told, two apartments of two rooms each. He paused for an instant to adjust the black silk mask, tried the door quietly, found it unlocked, opened it with a sudden, quick, brisk movement—and, stepping inside, leaned with his back against it.

"Good-morning," said Jimmie Dale pleasantly.

It was a squalid place, a miserable hole, in which a single flickering, yellow gas jet gave light. It was almost bare of furniture; there was nothing but a couple of cheap chairs, a rickety table—unpawnable. A boy, he was hardly more than that, perhaps twenty-two, from a posture in which he was huddled across the table with head buried in outflung arms, sprang with a startled cry to his feet.

"Good-morning," said Jimmie Dale again. "Your name's Hagan, Bert Hagan—isn't it? And you work for Isaac

Brolsky in the secondhand shop over on West Broadway —don't you?"

The boy's lips quivered, and the gaunt, hollow, half-starved face, white, ashen-white now, was pitiful.

"I—I guess you got me," he faltered. "I—I suppose you're a plain-clothes man, though I never knew dicks wore masks."

"They don't generally," said Jimmie Dale coolly. "It's a fad of mine—Bert Hagan."

The lad, hanging to the table, turned his head away for a moment—and there was silence.

Presently Hagan spoke again. "I'll go," he said numbly. "I won't make any trouble. Would—would you mind not speaking loud? I—I wouldn't like her to know."

"Her?" said Jimmie Dale softly.

The boy tiptoed across the room, opened a connecting door a little, peered inside, opened it a little wider—and looked over his shoulder at Jimmie Dale.

Jimmie Dale crossed to the boy, looked inside the other room—and his lip twitched queerly, as the sight sent a quick, hurt throb through his heart. A young woman, younger than the boy, lay on a tumble-down bed, a rag of clothing over her—her face with a deathlike pallor upon it, as she lay in what appeared to be a stupor. She was ill, critically ill; it needed no trained eye to discern a fact all too apparent to the most casual observer. The squalor, the glaring poverty here, was even more pitifully in evidence than in the other room—only here upon a chair beside the bed was a cluster of medicine bottles and a little heap of fruit.

Jimmie Dale drew back silently as the boy closed the door.

Hagan walked to the table and picked up his hat.

"I'm—I'm ready," he said brokenly. "Let's go."

"Just a minute," said Jimmie Dale. "Tell us about it."

"'Twon't take long," said Hagan, trying to smile. "She's my wife. The sickness took all we had. I—I kinder got behind in the rent and things. They were going to fire us out of here—to-morrow. And there wasn't any money

for the medicine, and—and the things she had to have. Maybe you wouldn't have done it—but I did. I couldn't see her dying there for the want of something a little money'd buy—and—and I couldn't"—he caught his voice in a little sob—"I couldn't see her thrown out on the street like that."

"And so," said Jimmie Dale, "instead of putting old Isaac's cash in the safe this evening when you locked up, you put it in your pocket instead—eh? Didn't you know you'd get caught?"

"What did it matter?" said the boy. He was twirling his misshapen hat between his fingers. "I know they'd know it was me in the morning when old Isaac found it gone, because there wasn't anybody else to do it. But I paid the rent for four months ahead to-night, and I fixed it so's she'd have medicine and things to eat. I was going to beat it before daylight myself—I"—he brushed his hand hurriedly across his cheek—"I didn't want to go—to leave her till I had to."

"Well, say"—there was wonderment in Jimmie Dale's tones, and his English lapsed into ungrammatical, reassuring vernacular—"ain't that queer! Say, I'm no detective. Gee, kid, did you think I was? Say, listen to this! I cracked old Isaac's safe half an hour ago—and I guess there won't be any idea going around that you got the money and I pulled a lemon. Say, I ain't superstitious, but it looks like luck meant you to have another chance, don't it?"

The hat dropped from Hagan's hands to the floor, and he swayed a little.

"You—you ain't a dick!" he stammered. "Then how'd you know about me and my name when you found the safe empty? Who told you?"

A wry grimace spread suddenly over Jimmie Dale's face beneath the mask, and he swallowed hard. Jimmie Dale would have given a good deal to have been able to answer that question himself.

"Oh, that!" said Jimmie Dale. "That's easy—I knew you worked there. Say, it's the limit, ain't it? Talk about your luck being in, why all you've got to do is to sit tight

and keep your mouth shut, and you're safe as a church. Only say, what are you going to do about the money, now you've got a four months' start and are kind of landed on your feet?"

"Do?" said the boy. "I'll pay it back, little by little. I meant to. I ain't no—" He stopped abruptly.

"Crook," supplied Jimmie Dale pleasantly. "Spit it right out, kid; you won't hurt my feelings none. Well, I'll tell you—you're talking the way I like to hear you—you pay that back, slide it in without his knowing it, a bit at a time, whenever you can, and you'll never hear a yip out of me; but if you don't, why it kind of looks as though I have a right to come down your street and get my share or know the reason why—eh?"

"Then you never get any share," said Hagan, with a catch in his voice. "I pay it back as fast as I can."

"Sure," said Jimmie Dale. "That's right—that's what I said. Well, so long—Hagan." And Jimmie Dale had opened the door and slipped outside.

An hour later, in his dressing room in his house on Riverside Drive, Jimmie Dale was removing his coat as the telephone, a hand instrument on the table, rang. Jimmie Dale glanced at it—and leisurely proceeded to remove his vest. Again the telephone rang. Jimmie Dale took off his curious, pocketed leather belt—as the telephone repeated its summons. He picked out the little drill he had used a short while before, and inspected it critically—feeling its point with his thumb, as one might feel a razor's blade. Again the telephone rang insistently. He reached languidly for the receiver, took it off its hook, and held it to his ear.

"Hello!" said Jimmie Dale, with a sleepy yawn. "Hello! Hello! Why the deuce don't you yank a man out of bed at two o'clock in the morning and have done with it, and—eh? Oh, that you, Carruthers?"

"Yes," came Carruthers' voice excitedly. "Jimmie, listen—listen! The Gray Seal's come to life! He's just pulled a break on West Broadway!"

"Good Lord!" gasped Jimmie Dale. "You don't say!"

FRANK L. PACKARD

THE ALIBI

"DEATH *to the Gray Seal!*"—through the underworld, in dens and dives that sheltered from the law the vultures that preyed upon society, prompted by self-fear, by secret dread, by reason of their very inability to carry out their purpose, the whispered sentence grew daily more venomous, more insistent. "*The Gray Seal, dead or alive—but the Gray Seal!*" It was the "standing orders" of the police. Railed at by a populace who angrily demanded at its hands this criminal of criminals, mocked at and threatened by a virulent press, stung to madness by the knowledge of its own impotence, flaunted impudently to its face by this mysterious Gray Seal to whose door the law laid a hundred crimes, for whom the bars of a death cell in Sing Sing was the certain goal could he but be caught, the police, to a man, was like an uncaged beast that, flicked to the raw by some unseen assailant and murderous in its fury, was crouched to strike. Grim paradox—a common bond that linked the hands of the law with those that outraged it!

Death to the Gray Seal! Was it, at last, the beginning of the end? Jimmie Dale, as Larry the Bat, unkempt, disreputable in appearance, supposed dope fiend, a figure familiar to every denizen below the dead line, skulked along the narrow, ill-lighted street of the East Side that, on the corner ahead, boasted the notorious resort to which Bristol Bob had paid the doubtful, if appropriate, compliment of giving his name. From under the rim of his battered hat, Jimmie Dale's eyes, veiled by half-closed, well-

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simulated drug-laden lids, missed no detail pertaining either to his surroundings or to the passers-by. Though already late in the evening, half-naked children played in the gutters; hawkers of multitudinous commodities cried their wares under gasoline banjo torches affixed to their push-carts; shawled women of half a dozen races, and men equally cosmopolitan, loitered at the curb, or blocked the pavement, or brushed by him. Now a man passed him, flinging a greeting from the corner of his mouth; now another, always without movement of the lips—and Jimmie Dale answered them—from the corner of his mouth.

But while his eyes were alert, his mind was only subconsciously attune to his surroundings. Was it indeed the beginning of the end? Some day, he had told himself often enough, the end must come. Was it coming now, surely, with a sort of grim implacability—when it was too late to escape! Slowly, but inexorably, even his personal freedom of action was narrowing, being limited, and, ironically enough, through the very conditions he had himself created as an avenue of escape.

It was not only the police now; it was, far more to be feared, the underworld as well. In the old days, the rôle of Larry the Bat had been assumed at intervals, at his own discretion, when, in a corner, he had no other way of escape; now it was forced upon him almost daily. The character of Larry the Bat could no longer be discarded at will. He had flung down the gauntlet to the underworld when, as the Gray Seal, he had closed the prison doors behind Stangeist, The Mope, Australian Ike, and Claire Deane, and the underworld had picked the gauntlet up. Betrayed, as they believed, by the one who, though unknown to them, they had counted the greatest among themselves, and each one fearful that his own betrayal might come next, every crook, every thug in the Bad Lands now eyed his oldest pal with suspicion and distrust, and each was a self-constituted sleuth, with the prod of self-preservation behind him, sworn to the accomplishment of that unhallowed slogan—death to the Gray Seal. Almost daily now he must show himself as Larry the Bat

in some gathering of the underworld—a prolonged absence from his haunts was not merely to invite certain suspicion, where all were suspicious of each other, it was to invite certain disaster. He had now either to carry the rôle like a little old man of the sea upon his back, or renounce it forever. And the latter course he dared not even consider—the Sanctuary was still the Sanctuary, and the rôle of Larry the Bat was still a refuge, the trump card in the lone hand he played.

He reached the corner, pushed open the door of Bristol Bob's, and shuffled in. The place was a glare of light, a hideous riot of noise. On a polished section of the floor in the centre, a turkey trot was in full swing; laughter and shouting vied raucously with an impossible orchestra.

Jimmie Dale slowly made the circuit of the room past the tables, that, ranged around the sides, were packed with occupants who thumped their glasses in tempo with the music and clamoured at the rushing waiters for replenishment. A dozen, two dozen, men and women greeted him. Jimmie Dale indifferently returned their salutes. What a galaxy of crooks—the cream of the underworld! His eyes, under half-closed lids, swept the faces—lags, dips, gatmen, yeggs, mob stormers, murderers, petty sneak thieves, stalls, hangers-on—they were all there. He knew them all; he was known to all.

He shuffled on to the far end of the room, his leer a little arrogant, a certain arrogance, too, in the tilt of his battered hat. He also was quite a celebrity in that gathering—Larry the Bat was of the aristocracy and the élite of gangland. Well, the show was over; he had stalked across the stage, performed for his audience—and in another hour now, free until he must repeat the same performance the next day in some other equally notorious dive, he would be sitting in for a rubber of bridge at that most exclusive of all clubs, the St. James, where none might enter save only those whose names were vouched for in the highest and most select circles, and where for partner he would possibly have a justice of the supreme court, or mayhap an eminent divine! He looked suddenly around him, as

though startled. It always startled him, that comparison. There was something too stupendous to be simply ironical in the incongruity of it. If—if he were ever run to earth!

His eyes met those of a heavy-built, coarse-featured man, the chewed end of a cigar in his mouth, who stepped from behind the bar, carrying a tin tray with two full glasses upon it. It was Bristol Bob, ex-pugilist, the proprietor.

"How're you, Larry?" grunted the man, with what he meant to be a smile.

Jimmie Dale was standing in the doorway of a passage that prefaced a rear exit to the lane. He moved aside to allow the other to pass.

" 'Ello, Bristol," he returned dispassionately.

Bristol Bob went on along down the passage, and Jimmie Dale shuffled slowly after him. He had intended to leave the place by the rear door—it obviated the possibility of an undesirable acquaintance joining company with him if he went out by the main entrance. But now his eyes were fixed on the proprietor's back with a sort of speculative curiosity. There was a private room off the passage, with a window on the lane; but they must be favoured customers indeed that Bristol Bob would condescend to serve personally—any one who knew Bristol Bob knew that.

Jimmie Dale slowed his shuffling gait, then quickened it again. Bristol Bob opened the door and passed into the private room—the door was just closing as Jimmie Dale shuffled by. He had had only a glance inside—but it was enough. They were favoured customers indeed! It was no wonder that Bristol Bob himself was on the job! Two men were in the room: Lannigan of headquarters, rated the smartest plain-clothes man in the country—and, across the table from Lannigan, Whitey Mack, as clever, finished and daring a crook as was to be found in the Bad Lands, whose particular "line" was diamonds, or, in the vernacular of his ilk, "white stones," that had earned him the sobriquet of "Whitey." Lannigan of headquarters, Whitey Mack of the underworld, sworn enemies those two—in secret session! Bristol Bob might well play the part of outer guard.

If a choice few of those outside in the dance hall could get a glimpse into that private room it would be "good-night" to Whitey Mack.

Jimmie Dale's eyes were narrowed a little as he shuffled on down the passage. Lannigan and Whitey Mack with their heads together! What was the game? There was nothing in common between the two men. Lannigan, it was well known, could not be "reached." Whitey Mack, with his ingenious cleverness, coupled with a cold-blooded fearlessness that had made him an object of unholy awe and respect in the eyes of the underworld, was a thorn that was sore beyond measure in the side of the police. Certainly, it was no ordinary thing that had brought these two together; especially, since, with the unrest and suspicion that was bubbling and seething below the dead line, and with which there was none more intimate than Whitey Mack, Whitey Mack was inviting a risk in "making up" with the police that could only be accounted for by some urgent and vital incentive.

Jimmie Dale pushed open the door that gave on the lane. Behind him, Bristol Bob closed the door of the private room and retreated back along the passage. Jimmie Dale stepped out into the lane—and instinctively his eyes sought the window of the private room. The shade was drawn, only a yellow murk filtered out into the black, unlighted lane, but suddenly he started noiselessly toward it. The window was open a bare inch or so at the bottom!

The sill was just shoulder high, and placing his ear to the opening, he flattened himself against the wall. He could not see inside, for the shade was drawn well to the bottom; but he could hear as distinctly as though he were at the table beside the two men—and at the first words, the loose, disjointed frame of Larry the Bat seemed to tauten curiously and strain forward lithe and tense.

"This Gray Seal dope listens good, Whitey; but, coming from you, I'm leery. You've got to show me."

"Don't you want him?" There was a nasty laugh from Whitey Mack.

"You *bet* I want him!" returned the headquarters man

with a suppressed savagery that left no doubt as to his earnestness. "I want him fast enough, but——"

"Then, blast him, so do I!" Whitey Mack rapped out with a vicious snarl. "So does every guy in the fleet down here. We got it in for him. You get that, don't you? He's got Stangeist and his gang steered for the electric chair now; he put a crimp in the Weasel the other night—get that? He's like a blasted wizard with what he knows. And who'll he deal the icy mitt to next? Me—damn him—me, for all I know!"

"That's all right," observed Lannigan coolly. "I'm not questioning your sincerity for a minute; I know all about that; but that doesn't land the Gray Seal. I'll work with you if you've anything to offer, but we've had enough 'tips' and 'information' handed us at headquarters in the past few years to make us a trifle skeptical. Show me what you've got, Whitey?"

"Show you!" echoed Whitey Mack passionately. "Sure, I'll show you! That's what I'm going to do—show you. I'll show you the Gray Seal! I ain't handing you any tips. *I've found out who the Gray Seal is!*"

There was a tense silence. It seemed to Jimmie Dale as though cold fingers were clutching at his heart, stifling its beat—then the blood came bursting to his forehead. He could not see into the room, but that silence was eloquent. It seemed as though he could picture the two men—Lannigan leaning suddenly forward—Lannigan and Whitey Mack staring tensely into each other's eyes.

"You—*what!*" It came low and grim from Lannigan.

"That's what!" asserted Whitey Mack bluntly. "You heard me! That's what I said! I know who the Gray Seal is—and I'm the only guy that's wise to him. Am I getting you in right?"

"You're sure?" demanded Lannigan hoarsely. "You're sure? Who is he, then?"

There was a half laugh, half snarl from Whitey Mack.

"Oh, no, you don't!" he growled. "Nix on that! What do you take me for—a fool? You beat it out of here and round him up—eh—while I suck my thumbs? Say, forget

it! Do you think I'm doing this because I love you? Why, blame you, you've been aching for a year to put the bracelets on me yourself! Say, wake up! I'm in on this myself."

Again that silence. Then Lannigan spoke slowly, in a puzzled way.

"I don't get you, Whitey," he said. "What do you mean?" Then, a little sharply: "You're quite right; you've got some reputation yourself, and you're badly 'wanted' if we could get the 'goods' on you. If you're trying to plant something, look out for yourself, or——"

"Can that!" snapped Whitey Mack threateningly. "Can that sort of spiel right now—or quit! I ain't telling you his name—yet. *But I'll take you to him to-night*—and you and me nabs him together. Is that straight enough goods for you?"

"Don't get sore," said Lannigan, more pacifically. "Yes, if you'll do that it's good enough for any man. But lay your cards on the table face up, Whitey—I want to see what you opened the pot on."

"You've seen 'em," Whitey Mack answered ungraciously. "I've told you already. The Gray Seal goes out for keeps—curse him for a snitch! If I bumped him off, or wised up any of the guys to it, and we was caught, we'd get the juice for it even if it was the Gray Seal, wouldn't we? Well, what's the use! If one of you dicks get him, he gets bumped off just the same, only regular, up in the wire parlour at Sing Sing. I ain't looking for that kind of trouble when I can duck it. See?"

"Sure," said Lannigan.

"Besides, and moreover," continued Whitey Mack, "there's *some* reward hung out for him that I'm figuring to horn in on. I'd swipe it all myself, don't you make any mistake about that, and you'd never get a look-in, only, sore as the mob is on the Gray Seal, it ain't healthy for any guy around these parts to get the reputation of being a snitch, no matter who he snitches on. Bump him off—sure! Snitching—well, you get the idea, eh? I'm ducking that, too. Get me?"

"I get you," said Lannigan, with a short, pleased laugh.

"Well, then," announced Whitey Mack, "here's my proposition, and it's my turn to hand out the 'look-out-for-yourself' dope. I'm busting the game wide open for you to play, but you throw me down, and"—his voice sank into a sullen snarl again—"you can take it from me, I'll get you for it!"

"All right," responded Lannigan soberly. "Let's hear it. If I agree to it, I'll stick to it."

"I believe you," said Whitey Mack curtly. "That's why I picked you out for the medal they'll pin on you for this. And here's getting down to tacks! I'll lead you to the Gray Seal to-night and help you nab him and stay with you to the finish, but there's to be nobody but you and me on the job. When it's done I fade away, and nobody's to know I snitched, and no questions asked as to how I found out about the Gray Seal. I ain't looking for any of the glory—you can fix that up to suit yourself. The cash is different—you come across with half the reward the day they pay it."

"You'll get it!" There was savage elation in Lannigan's voice, the emphatic smash of a fist on the table. "You're on, Whitey. And if we get the Gray Seal to-night, I'll do better by you than that."

"We'll get him!" said Whitey Mack, with a vicious oath. "And——"

Jimmie Dale crouched suddenly low down, close against the wall. The crunch of a footstep sounded from the end of the lane. Some one had turned in from the cross street, some fifty yards away, and was heading evidently for the back entrance to Bristol Bob's. Jimmie Dale edged noiselessly, cautiously back past the doorway, kept on, pressed close against the wall, and finally paused. He had not been seen. The back door of Bristol Bob's opened and closed. The man had gone in.

For a moment Jimmie Dale stood hesitant. There was a wild surging in his brain, something like a myriad batteries of trip hammers seemed to be pounding at his temples. Then, almost blindly, he kept on down the lane in the same

direction in which he had started to retreat—as well one cross street as another.

He turned into the cross street, went along it—and presently emerged into the full tide of the Bowery. It was garishly lighted; people swarmed about him. Subconsciously, there were crowded sidewalks; subconsciously, he was on the Bowery—that was all.

Ruin, disaster, peril faced him—faced him, and staggered him with the suddenness of the shock. Was it true? No; it could not be true! It was a bluff—Whitey Mack was bluffing. Jimmie Dale's lips grew thin in a mirthless smile as he shook his head. Neither Whitey Mack nor any other man would dare to bluff like that. It was too straight, too open-handed, Whitey Mack had laid his cards too plainly on the table. Whitey Mack's words rang in his ears: "I'll *lead* you to the Gray Seal to-night and help you nab him and stay with you to the finish." The man meant what he said, meant what he said, too, about the "finish" of the Gray Seal; not a man in the Bad Lands but meant—death to the Gray Seal! But how, by what means, when, where had Whitey Mack got his information? "I'm the only one that's wise," Whitey Mack had said. It seemed impossible. It *was* impossible! Whitey Mack was sincere enough probably in what he had said, but the man simply could not know. Whitey Mack could only have spotted some one that, for some reason or other, he *imagined* was the Gray Seal. That was it—must be it! Whitey Mack had made a mistake. What clew could he have obtained to——

Over the unwashed face of Larry the Bat a gray pallor spread slowly. His fingers were plucking at the frayed edge of his inside vest pocket. The dark eyes seemed to turn coal-black. A laugh, like the laugh of one damned, rose to his lips, and was choked back. It was gone! *Gone!* That thin metal case, like a cigarette case, that, between the little sheets of oil paper, held those diamond-shaped, gray-coloured, adhesive seals, the insignia of the Gray Seal—was gone! Clew! It seemed as though there were an overpowering nausea upon him. *Clew!* That little case was not a clew—it was a death warrant!

His hands clenched fiercely. If he could only think for a moment! The lining of his pocket had given away. The case had dropped out. But there was nothing about the case to identify any one as the Gray Seal unless it were found in one's actual possession. Therefore Whitey Mack, who have solved his identity, must have seen him drop the case. There could be no question about that. It was equally obvious then that Whitey Mack would know the Gray Seal as Larry the Bat. Did he also know him as Jimmie Dale? Yes, or no? It was a vital question. His life hung on it.

That keen, facile brain, numbed for the moment, was beginning to work with lightning speed. It was four o'clock that afternoon when he had assumed the character of Larry the Bat—some time between four o'clock and the present, it was now well after eleven, the case had dropped from his pocket. There had been ample time then for Whitey Mack to have made that appointment with Lannigan—and ample time to have made a surreptitious visit to the Sanctuary. Had Whitey Mack gone there? Had Whitey Mack found that hiding place in the flooring under the oilcloth? Had Whitey Mack discovered that the Gray Seal was not only Larry the Bat—but Jimmie Dale?

Jimmie Dale swept his hand across his forehead. It was damp from little clinging beads of moisture. Should he go to the Sanctuary and change—become Jimmie Dale again? Was it the safest thing to do—or the most dangerous? Even if Whitey Mack had been there and discovered the dual personality of Larry the Bat, how would he, Jimmie Dale, know it? The man would have been crafty enough to have left no sign behind him. Was it to the Sanctuary that Whitey Mack meant to lead Lannigan that evening—or did Whitey Mack know him as Jimmie Dale, and to make it the more sensational, plan to carry out the coup, say, at the St. James Club? Whitey Mack and Lannigan were still at Bristol Bob's; he had probably time, if he so elected, to reach the Sanctuary, change, and get away again. But every minute was priceless now. What should he do? Run from the city as he was for cover—or take the gambler's chance? Whitey Mack knew him as Larry

the Bat—it was not certain that Whitey Mack knew him as Jimmie Dale.

He had halted, absorbed, in front of a moving-picture theatre. Great placards, at first but a blur of colour, suddenly forced themselves in concrete form upon his consciousness. Letters a foot high leaped out at him: "THE DOUBLE LIFE." There was the picture of a banker in his private office hastily secreting a forged paper as the hero in the guise of a clerk entered; the companion picture was the banker in convict stripes staring out from behind the barred doors of a cell. There seemed a ghastly augury in the coincidence. Why should a thing like that be thrust upon him to shake his nerve when he needed nerve now more than he had ever needed it in his life before?

He raised his hand to jerk aimlessly at the brim of his hat, dropped his hand abruptly to his side again, and started quickly, hurriedly away through the throng around him. A sort of savagery had swept upon him. In a flash he had made his decision. He would take the gambler's chance! And afterward—Jimmie Dale's lips were like a thin, straight line—it was Whitey Mack's life or his own! Whitey Mack had said he was the only one that was wise—and Whitey Mack had not told Lannigan yet, wouldn't tell Lannigan until the show-down. If he, Jimmie Dale, got to the Sanctuary, became Jimmie Dale and got away again, even if Whitey Mack knew him as Jimmie Dale, there was still a chance. It was his life or Whitey Mack's—Whitey Mack, with his lean-jawed, clean-shaven wolf's face! If he could *get* Whitey Mack before the other was ready to tell Lannigan! Surely he had the right of self-preservation! Surely his life was as valuable as Whitey Mack's, as valuable as a man's who, as those in the secrets of the underworld knew well enough, had blood upon his hands, who lived by crime, who was a menace to the community! Had he not the right to preserve his own life at the expense of one such as that? He had never taken life—the thought was abhorrent! But was there any other way in event of Whitey Mack knowing him as Jimmie Dale? His back was against the wall; he was trapped; certain death, and, worse,

ishonour stared him in the face. Lannigan and Whitey Mack would be together—the odds would be two to one gainst him—and he had no quarrel with Lannigan—somekow he must let Lannigan out of it.

The other side of the street was less crowded. He rossed over, and, still with the shuffling tread that dozens round him knew as the characteristic gait of Larry the Bat, but covering the ground with amazing celerity, he urried along. It was only at the end of the block, that ross street from the Bowery that led to the Sanctuary. How much time had he? He turned the corner into the arker cross street. Whitey Mack would have learned rom Bristol Bob that Larry the Bat had just been there; hat is, that Larry the Bat was not at the Sanctuary. Whitey Mack would probably be in no hurry—he and annigan might wait until later, until Whitey Mack should e satisfied that Larry the Bat had gone home. It was he line of least resistance; they would not attempt to cour the city for him. They might even wait in that rivate room at Bristol Bob's until they decided that it as time to sally out. He might perhaps still find them here when he got back; at any rate, from there he must ck up their trail again. On the other hand—all this was at supposition—they might make at once for the Sancuary to lie in wait for him. In any case, there was need, esperate need, for haste.

He glanced sharply around him; and, by the side of the nement house now that bordered on the alleyway, with a rious, swift, gliding motion, he seemed to blend into the adow and darkness. It was the Sanctuary, that room on e first floor of the tenement, the tenement that had three trances, three exits—a passageway through to the saloon the next street that abutted on the rear, the usual ont door, and the side door in the alleyway. Gone was e shuffling gait. Quick, alert, he ran, crouching, bent wn, along the alleyway, reached the side door, opened it ealthily, closed it behind him with equal caution, and, the dark entry, stood motionless, listening intently.

There was no sound. He began to mount the rickety,

dilapidated stairs; and, where it seemed that the lightest tread must make them creak out in blatant protest, his trained muscles, delicately compensating his body weight, carried him upward with a silence that was almost uncanny. There was need of silence, as there was need of haste. He was not so sure now of the time at his disposal—that he had even reached the Sanctuary *first*. How long had he loitered in that half-dazed way on the Bowery? He did not know—perhaps longer than he had imagined. There was the possibility that Whitey Mack and Lannigan were already above, waiting for him; but, even if they were not already there and he got away before they came, it was imperative that no one should know that Larry the Bat had come and gone.

He reached the landing, and paused again, his right hand, with a vicious muzzle of his automatic peeping now from between his fingers, thrown a little forward. It was black, utterly black, around him. Again that stealthy, catlike tread—and his ear was at the keyhole of the Sanctuary door. A full minute, priceless though it was, passed; then, satisfied that the room was empty, he drew his head back from the keyhole, and those slim, tapering fingers, that in their tips seemed to embody all the human senses, felt over the lock. Apparently it had been undisturbed; but that was no proof that Whitey Mack had not been there after finding the metal case. Whitey Mack was known to be clever with a lock—clever enough for that, anyhow.

He slipped in the key, turned it, and, on hinges that were always oiled, silently pushed the door open and stepped across the threshold. He closed the door until it was just ajar, that any sound might reach him from without—and, whipping off his coat, began to undress swiftly.

There was no light. He dared not use the gas; it might be seen from the alleyway. He was moving now quickly, surely, silently here and there. It was like some weird spectre figure, a little blacker than the surrounding darkness, flitting about the room. The oilcloth in the corner was turned back, the loose flooring lifted, the clothes of Jimmie

Dale taken out, the rags of Larry the Bat put in. The minutes flew by. It was not the change of clothing that took long—it was the eradication of Larry the Bat's make-up from his face, throat, neck, wrists, and hands. Occasionally his head was turned in a tense, listening attitude; but always the fingers were busy, working with swift deftness.

It was done at last. Larry the Bat had vanished, and in his place stood Jimmie Dale, the young millionaire, the social lion of New York, immaculate in well-tailored tweeds. He stooped to the hole in the flooring, and, his fingers going unerringly to their hiding place, took out a black silk mask and an electric flashlight—his automatic was already in his possession. His lips parted grimly. Who knew what part a flashlight might not play—and he would need the mask for Lannigan's benefit, even if it did not disguise him from Whitey Mack. Had he left any telltale evidence of his visit? It was almost worth the risk of a light to make sure. He hesitated, then shook his head, and, stooping again, carefully replaced the flooring and laid the oilcloth over it—he dared not show a light at any cost.

But now even more caution than before was necessary. At times, the lodgers had naturally enough seen their fellow lodger, Larry the Bat, enter and leave the tenement—none had ever seen Jimmie Dale either leave or enter. He stole across the room to the door, halted to assure himself that the hall was empty, slipped out into the hall, and locked the door behind him. Again that trained, long-practiced, silent tread upon the stairs. It seemed as though an hour passed before he reached the bottom, and his brain was shrieking at him to hurry, hurry, *hurry!* The entryway; last, the door, the alleyway, a long breath of relief—and he was on the cross street.

A step, two, he took in the direction of the Bowery—and he was bending down as though to tie his shoe, his automatic, from his side pocket, concealed in his hand. *Was that some one there?* He could have sworn he saw a shadow-like form start out from behind the steps of the house on the opposite side of the street as he had emerged from the alleyway. In his bent posture, without seemingly

turning his head, his eyes swept sharply up and down the other side of the ill-lighted street. Nothing! There was not even a pedestrian in sight on the block from there to the Bowery.

Jimmie Dale straightened up nonchalantly, and stooped almost instantly again, as though the lace were still proving refractory. Again that sharp, searching glance. Again —nothing! He went forward now in apparent unconcern; but his right hand, instead of being buried in his coat pocket, swung easily at his side.

It was strange! His ineffective ruse to the contrary, he was certain that he had not been mistaken. Was it Whitey Mack? Was the question answered? Was the Gray Seal known, too, as Jimmie Dale? Were they trailing him now, with the climax to come at the club, at his own palatial home, wherever the surroundings would best lend themselves to assuaging that inordinate thirst for the sensational that was so essentially a characteristic of the confirmed criminal? What a headline in the morning's papers it would make!

At the corner he loitered by the curb to light a cigarette —still not a soul in sight on either side of the street behind him, except a couple of Italians who had just passed by. Strange again! The intuition, if it were only intuition, was still strong. He swung abruptly on his heel, mingled with the passers-by on the Bowery, walked a rapid half dozen steps until the building hid the cross street, then ran across the road to the opposite side of the Bowery, and, in a crowd now, came back to the corner. He crossed from curb to curb slowly, sheltered by a fringe of people that, however, in no way obstructed his view down the side street. And then Jimmie Dale shrugged his shoulders. He had evidently been mistaken, after all. He was overexcited; his nerves were raw—that, perhaps, was the solution. Meanwhile, every minute was counting, if Whitey Mack and Lannigan should still be at Bristol Bob's.

He kept on down the Bowery, hurrying with growing impatience through the crowds that massed in front of various places of amusement. He had not intended to come

ilong the Bowery, and, except for what had occurred, would have taken a less frequented street. He would turn off at the next block.

He was in front of that moving-picture theatre again. "THE DOUBLE LIFE"—his eyes were attracted involuntarily to the lurid, overdone display. It seemed to threaten him; it seemed to dangle before him a premonition, as it were, of what the morning held in store; but now, too, it seemed to feed into flame that smouldering fury that possessed him. His life—or Whitey Mack's! Men, women, and the children who turned night into day in that quarter of the city were clustered thick around the signs, hiving like bees to the bald sensationalism. Almost savagely he began to force his way through the crowd—and the next instant, like a man stunned, had stopped in his tracks. His fingers had closed in a fierce, spasmodic clutch over an envelope that had been thrust suddenly into his hand.

"Jimmie!" from somewhere came a low, quick voice. "Jimmie, it is half-past eleven now—*hurry.*"

He whirled, scanning wildly this face, then that. It was her voice—*her* voice! The sensitive fingers were telegraphing to his brain, as they always did, that the texture of the envelope, too, was hers. Her voice; yes, anywhere, out of a thousand voices, he would distinguish hers—but her face, he had never seen that. Which, out of all the crowd around him, was hers? Surely he could tell her by her dress; she would be different; her personality alone must single her out. She——

"Say, have youse got de pip, or do youse t'ink youse own de earth!" a man flung at him, heaving and pushing to get by.

With a start, though he scarcely heard the man, Jimmie Dale moved on. His brain was afire. All the irony of the world seemed massed in a sudden, overwhelming attack upon him. It was useless—intuitively he had known it was useless from the instant he had heard her voice. It was always the same—always! For years she had eluded him like that, come upon him without warning and disap-

peared, but leaving always that tangible proof of her existence—a letter, the call of the Gray Seal to arms. But tonight it was as it had never been before. It was not alone baffled chagrin now, not alone the longing, the wild desire to see her face, to look into her eyes—it was life and death. She had come at the very moment when she, perhaps alone of all the world, could have pointed the way out, when life, liberty, everything that was common to them both was at stake, in deadly peril—and she had gone, ignorant of it all, leaving him staggered by the very possibility of the succour that was held up before his eyes only to be snatched away without power of his to grasp it. His intuition had not been at fault—he had made no mistake in that shadow across the street from the Sanctuary. He had been followed; and it was she who had followed him, until, in a crowd, she had seized the opportunity of a moment ago. Though ultimately, perhaps, it changed nothing, it was a relief in a way to know that it was she, not Whitey Mack, who had been lurking there; but her persistent, incomprehensible determination to preserve the mystery with which she surrounded herself was likely now to cost them both a ghastly price. If he could only have had one word with her—just one word!

The letter in his hand crackled under his clenched fist. He stared at it in a half-blind, half-bitter way. The call of the Gray Seal to arms! Another coup, with its incident danger and peril, that she had planned for him to execute! He could have laughed aloud at the inhuman mockery of it. The call of the Gray Seal to arms—*now!* When with every faculty drained to its last resource, cornered, trapped, he was fighting for his very existence!

"Jimmie, it is half-past eleven now—*hurry!*" The words were jangling discordantly in his brain.

And now he laughed outright, mirthlessly. A young girl hanging on her escort's arm, passing, glanced at him and giggled. It was a different Jimmie Dale for the moment. For once his immobility had forsaken him. He laughed again—a sort of unnatural, desperate indifference to everything falling upon him. What did it matter, the moment or

two it would take to read the letter? He looked around him. He was on the corner in front of the Palace Saloon, and, turning abruptly, he stepped in through the swinging doors. As Larry the Bat, he knew the place well. At the rear of the barroom and along the side of the wall were some half dozen little stalls, partitioned off from each other. Several of these were unoccupied, and he chose the one farthest from the entrance. It was private enough; no one would disturb him.

From the aproned individual who presented himself he ordered a drink. The man returned in a moment, and Jimmie Dale tossed a coin on the table, bidding the other keep the change. He wanted no drink; the transaction was wholly perfunctory. The waiter was gone; he pushed the glass away from him, and tore the envelope open.

A single sheet, closely written on both sides of the paper, was in his hand. It was her writing; there was no mistaking that, but every word, every line bore evidence of frantic haste. Even that customary formula, "dear philanthropic crook," that had prefaced every line she had ever written him before, had been omitted. His eyes traversed the first few lines with that strange indifference that had settled upon him. What, after all, did it matter what it was; he could do nothing—not even save himself probably. And then, with a little start, he read the lines over again, muttering snatches from them.

". . . Max Diestricht — diamonds — the Ross-Logan stones—wedding—sliding panel in wall of workshop—end of the room near window—ten boards to the right from side wall—press small knot in the wood in the centre of the tenth board—to-night . . ."

It brought a sudden thrill of excitement to Jimmie Dale that, impossible as he would have believed it an instant ago, for the moment overshadowed the realisation of his own peril. A robbery such as that, if it were ever accomplished, would stir the country from end to end; it would set New York by the ears; it would loose the police in full

cry like a pack of bloodhounds with their leashes slipped. The society columns of the newspapers had been busy for months featuring the coming marriage of the Ross-Logans' daughter to one of the country's young merchant princes. The combined fortunes of the two families would make the young couple the richest in America. The prospective groom's wedding gift was to be a diamond necklace of perfectly matched, large stones that would eclipse anything of the kind in the country. Europe, the foreign markets, had been literally combed and ransacked to supply the gems. The stones had arrived in New York the day before, the duty on them alone amounting to over fifty thousand dollars. All this had appeared in the papers.

Jimmie Dale's brows drew together in a frown. On just exactly what percentage the duty was figured he did not know; but it was high enough on the basis of fifty thousand dollars to assume safely that the assessed value of the stones was not less than four times that amount. Two hundred thousand dollars—laid down, a quarter of a million! Well, why not? In more than one quarter diamonds were ranked as the soundest kind of an investment. Furthermore, through personal acquaintance with the "high contracting parties," who were in his own set, he knew it to be true.

He shrugged his shoulders. The papers, too, had thrown the limelight on Max Diestricht, who, though for quite a time the fashion in the social world, had, up to the present, been comparatively unknown to the average New Yorker. His own knowledge of Max Diestricht went deeper than the superficial biography furnished by the newspapers—the old Hollander had done more than one piece of exquisite jewelry work for him. The old fellow was a character that beggared description, eccentric to the point of extravagance, and deaf as a post; but, in craftmanship, a modern Cellini. He employed no workmen, lived alone over his shop on one of the lower streets between Fifth and Sixth Avenues near Washington Square—and possessed a splendid contempt for such protective contrivances as safes and vaults. If his prospective patrons expostulated

on this score before intrusting him with their valuables, they were at liberty to take their work elsewhere. It was Max Diestricht who honoured you by accepting the commission; not you who honoured Max Diestricht by intrusting him with it. "Of what use is it to me, a safe!" he would exclaim. "It hides nothing; it only says, 'I am inside; do not look farther; come and get me!' Yes? It is to explode with the nitro-glycerine—*pouf!*—and I am deaf and I hear nothing. It is a foolishness, that"—he had a habit of prodding at one with a levelled forefinger—"every night somewhere they are robbed, and have I been robbed? *Hein,* tell me that; have I been robbed?"

It was true. In ten years, though at times having stones and precious metal aggregating large amounts deposited with him by his customers, Max Diestricht had never lost so much as the gold filings. There was a queer smile on Jimmie Dale's lips now. The knot in the tenth board was significant! Max Diestricht was scruplously honest, a genius in originality and conception of design, a master in the perfection and delicacy of his finished work—he had been commissioned to design and set the Ross-Logan necklace.

The brain works quickly. All this and more had flashed almost instantaneously through Jimmie Dale's mind. His eyes fell to the letter again, and he read on. Halfway through, a sudden whiteness blanched his face, and, following it, a surging tide of red that mounted to his temples. It dazed him; it seemed to rob him for the moment of the power of coherent thought. He was wrong; he had not read aright. It was incredible, dare-devil beyond belief—and yet in its very audacity lay success. He finished the letter, read it once more—and his fingers mechanically began to tear it into little shreds. His brain was in a whirl, a vortex of conflicting emotions. Had Whitey Mack and Lannigan left Bristol Bob's yet? Where were they now? Was there time for—*this?* He was staring at the little torn scraps of paper in his hand. He thrust them suddenly into his pocket, and jerked out his watch. It was nearly midnight. The broad, muscular shoulders seemed to square

back curiously, the jaws to clamp a little, the face to harden and grow cold until it was like stone. With a swift movement he emptied his glass into the cuspidor, set the glass back on the table, and stepped out from the stall. His destination was Max Diestricht's.

The Palace Saloon was near the upper end of the Bowery, and, failing a taxicab, of which none was in sight, his quickest method was to walk, and he started briskly forward. It was not far; and it was barely ten minutes from the time he had left the Palace Saloon when he swung through Washington Square to Fifth Avenue, and, a moment later, turned from that thoroughfare, heading west toward Sixth Avenue, along one of those streets which, with the city's northward trend, had quite lost any distinctive identity, and from being once a modestly fashionable residential section had now become a conglomerate potpourri of small tradesmen's stores, shops and apartments of the poorer class. He knew Max Diestricht's—he could well have done without the aid of the arc lamp which, even if dimly, indicated that low, almost tumbledown, two-story structure tucked away between the taller buildings on either side that almost engulfed it. It was late. The street was quiet. The shops and stores had long since been closed, Max Diestricht's among them—the old Hollander's name in painted white letters stood out against the background of a darkened workshop window. In the story above, the lights, too, were out; Max Diestricht was probably fast asleep—and he was stone deaf!

A glance up and down the street, and Jimmie Dale was standing, or, rather, leaning against Max Diestricht's door. There was no one to see, and if there were, what was there to attract attention to a man standing nonchalantly for a moment in a doorway? It was only for a moment. Those master fingers of Jimmie Dale were working surely, swiftly, silently. A little steel instrument that was never out of his possession was in the lock and out again. The door opened, closed; he drew the black silk mask from his pocket and slipped it over his face. Immediately in front of him the stairs led upward; immediately to his right was the door

into the shop—the modest street entrance was common to both.

The door into the workship was not locked. He opened it, stepped inside, and closed it quietly behind him. The place was in blackness. He stood for a moment silent, straining his ears to catch the slightest sound, reconstructing the plan of his surroundings in his mind as he remembered it. It was a narrow, oblong room, running the entire depth of the building, a very long room, blank walls on either side, a window in the middle of the rear wall that gave on a back yard, and from the back yard there was access to the lane; also, as he remembered the place, it was a riot of disorder, with workbenches and odds and ends strewn without system or reason in every direction—one had need of care to negotiate it in the dark. He took his flashlight from his pocket, and, preliminary to a more intimate acquaintance with the interior, glanced out through the front window near which he stood—and, with a suppressed cry, shrank back instinctively against the wall.

Two men were crossing the street, heading directly for the shop door. The arc lamp lighted up their faces. *It was Inspector Lannigan of headquarters and Whitey Mack!* The quick intake of Jimmie Dale's breath was sucked through clenched teeth. They were close on his heels then—far closer than he had imagined. It would take Whitey Mack scarcely any longer to open that front door than it had taken him. Close on his heels! His face was rigid. He could hear them now at the door. The flashlight in his hand winked down the length of the room. It was a dangerous thing to do, but it was still more dangerous to stumble into some object and make a noise. He darted forward, circuiting a workbench, a stool, a small hand forge. Again the flashlight gleamed. Against the side wall, near the rear, was another workbench, with a sort of coarse canvas curtain hanging part way down in front of it, evidently to protect such things as might be stored away beneath it from dust, and Jimmie Dale sprang for it, whipped back the canvas, and crawled un-

derneath. He was not an instant too soon. As the canvas fell back into place, the shop door opened, closed, and the two men had stepped inside.

Whitey Mack's voice, in a low whisper though it was, seemed to echo raucously through the shop.

"Mabbe we'll have a sweet wait, but I got the straight dope on this. He's going to make a try for Dutchy's sparklers to-night. We'll let him go the limit, and we don't either of us make a move till he's pinched them, and then we get him with the goods on him. He can't get away; he hasn't a hope! There's only two ways of getting in here or getting out—this door and window here, and a window that's down there at the back. You guard this, and I'll take care of the other end. Savvy?"

"Right!" Lannigan answered grimly. "Go ahead!"

There was the sound of footsteps moving forward, then a vicious bump, the scraping of some object along the floor, and a muffled curse from Whitey Mack.

"Use your flashlight!" advised the inspector, in a guarded voice.

"I haven't got one," growled Whitey Mack. "It's all right. I'll get along."

Again the steps, but more warily now, as though the man were cautiously feeling ahead of him for possible obstacles. Jimmie Dale for a moment held his breath. He could have reached out and touched the man as the other passed. Whitey Mack went on until he had taken up a position against the rear wall. Jimmie Dale heard him as he brushed against it.

Then silence fell. He was between them now. Stretched full length on the floor, Jimmie Dale raised the lower portion of the canvas away from in front of his face. He could see nothing; the place was in Stygian blackness; but it had been close and stifling, and, at least, it gave him more air.

The minutes dragged by—each more interminable than the one that had gone before. Not a movement, not a sound, and then, through the stillness, very faint at first, came the regular, repressed breathing of Whitey

Mack, who was much the nearer of the two men. And, once noticeable, almost imperceptible as it was, it seemed to pervade the room and fill it with a strange, ominous resonance that rose and fell until the blackness palpitated with it.

Slowly, very slowly, Jimmie Dale's hand crept into his pocket—and crept out again with his automatic. He lay motionless once more. Time in any concrete sense ceased to exist. Fancied shapes began to assume form in the darkness. By the door, Lannigan stirred uneasily, shifting his position slightly.

Was it hours—was it only minutes? It seemed to ring through the nerve-racking stillness like the shriek of a hurtling shell—and it was only a whisper.

"Watch yourself, Lannigan," whispered Whitey Mack. "He's coming now through the yard! Don't move till I start something. Let him get his paws on the sparklers."

Silence again. And then a low rasping at the window, like the gnawing of a rat; then, inch by inch, the sash was lifted. There was the sound as of a body forcing its way over the sill cautiously, then a step upon the floor inside, another, and still another. The figure of a man loomed up suddenly against the glow of a flashlight as he threw the round, white ray inquisitively here and there over the rear wall. And now he appeared to be counting the boards. One, two, three—ten. His hand ran up and down the tenth board. Again and again he repeated the operation, and something like the snarl of a baited beast echoed through the room. He half turned to snatch at something in his pocket, and the light for a moment showed a black-bearded, lowering face, partially hidden by a peaked cap that was pulled far down over his eyes.

There was the rip and tear of rending wood, as a steel jimmy, in lieu of the spring the man evidently could not find, bit in between the boards, a muttered oath of satisfaction, and a portion of the wall slid back, disclosing what looked like a metal-lined cupboard. He reached in, seized one of a dozen little boxes, and wrenched off the

cover. A blue, scintillating gleam seemed to leap out to meet the white ray of the flashlight. The man chuckled hoarsely, and began to cram the rest of the boxes into his pockets.

Jimmie Dale stirred. On hands and knees he was creeping now from beneath the workbench. Something caught and tore behind him—the canvas curtain. And at the sound, with a sharp cry, the man at the wall whirled, the light went out, and he sprang toward the window. Jimmie Dale gained his feet and leaped forward. A revolver shot cut a lane of fire through the blackness; and, above the roar of the report, Whitey Mack's voice in a fierce yell:

"It's all right, Lannigan! I got him! No—!" There was a terrific crash of breaking glass. "He's got away!"

"Not yet, he hasn't!" gritted Jimmie Dale between his teeth, and his clubbed pistol swung crashing to the head of a dark form in front of him.

There was a half sigh, half moan. The form slid limply to the floor. Lannigan was floundering down the shop, leaping obstacles in a mad rush, his flashlight picking out the way.

Jimmie Dale stepped swiftly backward, and his hand groped out for the droplight, over the end of the bench, that he had knocked against in his own rush. His fingers clutched it—and the lower end of the shop was flooded with light. Except for his felt hat that lay a little distance away, there was no sign of Whitey Mack; the huddled form of the man, who but a moment since had chuckled as he pocketed old Max Diestricht's gems, lay sprawled, inert, upon the floor, and Lannigan was staring into the muzzle of Jimmie Dale's automatic.

"Drop that gun, Lannigan!" said Jimmie Dale coolly. "And I'll trouble you not to make a noise; it might attract attention from the street; there's been too much already. *Drop that gun!*"

The revolver clattered from Lannigan's hand to the floor. A step forward, and Jimmie Dale's toe sent it spinning under a bench. Another step, and, his automatic still

covering the other, he had whipped a pair of handcuffs from the officer's side pocket.

Lannigan, as though the thought had never occurred to him, offered no resistance. He was staring in a dazed sort of way back and forth from Jimmie Dale to the man on the floor.

"What's this mean?" he burst out suddenly. "Where's——"

"Your wrist, please!" requested Jimmie Dale pleasantly. "No—the left one. Thank you"—as the handcuff snapped shut. "Now go over there and sit down on the floor beside that fellow. *Quick!*" Jimmie Dale's voice rasped suddenly, imperatively.

Still bewildered, but a little sullen now, Lannigan obeyed. Jimmie Dale stooped quickly, and snapped the other link of the handcuff over the unconscious man's right wrist.

Jimmie Dale smiled.

"That's the approved way of taking your man, isn't it? Left wrist to the prisoner's right. He's only stunned; he'll be around in a moment. Know him?"

Lannigan shook his head.

"Take a good look at him," invited Jimmie Dale. "You ought to know most of them in the business."

Lannigan bent over a little closer, and then, with an amazed cry, his free hand shot forward and tore away the other's beard.

It was Whitey Mack!

Lannigan gasped and fell back.

"Quite so!" said Jimmie Dale evenly. "You'll find the diamonds in his pockets, and, excuse me"—his fingers were running through Whitey Mack's clothes—"ah, here it is"—the thin metal case was in his hand—"a little article that belongs to me, and whose loss, I am free to admit, caused me considerable concern until I was informed that he had only found it without having the slightest idea as to whom it belonged. It made quite a difference!" He had opened the case carelessly before Lannigan's eyes. "'The Gray Seal!' I'll say it for you,"

said Jimmie Dale whimsically. "This is what probably put the idea into his head, after first, in some way, having discovered old Max Diestricht's hiding place; and, if I had given him time enough, he would probably have stuck one of these seals, in clumsy imitation of that little eccentricity of mine, on the wall over there to stamp the job as genuine. You begin to get it, don't you, Lannigan? Pretty sure-fire as an alibi, eh? And he'd have got away with it, too, as far as you were concerned. He had only to fire that shot, smash the window, tuck his false beard, mustache, and peaked cap into his pocket, put on his own hat that you see there on the floor—and yell that the man had escaped. He'd help you chase the thief, too! Rather neat, don't you think, Lannigan? And worth the risk, too, considering the howl that would go up at the theft of those stones, and that, known as the slickest diamond thief in the country, he would be the first to be suspected—except that the police themselves, in the person of Inspector Lannigan of headquarters, would be prepared to prove a perfectly good alibi for him."

Lannigan's head was thrust forward; his eyes, hard, were riveted on Whitey Mack.

"He'll get his for this!" he said, fiercely.

It was a moment before Jimmie Dale spoke; he was musingly examining the automatic in his hand.

"I am going now, Lannigan," he observed quietly. "I require, say, fifteen minutes in which to effect my escape. It is, of course, obvious that an alarm raised by you might prove extremely awkward, but a piece of canvas from that bench there, together with a bit of string, would make a most effective gag. I prefer, however, not to submit you to that indignity. Instead, I offer you the alternative of giving me your word to remain quietly where you are for—fifteen minutes."

Lannigan hesitated.

Jimmie Dale smiled.

"I agree," said Lannigan shortly.

Jimmie Dale stepped back. The electric-light switch

clicked. The place was in darkness. There was a moment, two, of utter stillness; then softly, from the front end of the shop, a whisper:

"If I were you, Lannigan, I'd take that gun from Whitey's pocket before he comes round and beats you to it."

And the door had closed silently behind Jimmie Dale.

ARTHUR B. REEVE

THE BLACK HAND

KENNEDY and I had been dining rather late one evening at Luigi's, a little Italian restaurant on the lower West Side. We had known the place well in our student days, and had made a point of visiting it once a month since, in order to keep in practice in the fine art of gracefully handling long shreds of spaghetti. Therefore we did not think it strange when the proprietor himself stopped a moment at our table to greet us. Glancing furtively around at the other diners, mostly Italians, he suddenly leaned over and whispered to Kennedy:

"I have heard of your wonderful detective work, Professor. Could you give a little advice in the case of a friend of mine?"

"Surely, Luigi. What is the case?" asked Craig, leaning back in his chair.

Luigi glanced around again apprehensively and lowered his voice. "Not so loud, sir. When you pay your check, go out, walk around Washington Square, and come in at the private entrance. I'll be waiting in the hall. My friend is dining privately upstairs."

We lingered a while over our chianti, then quietly paid the check and departed.

True to his word, Luigi was waiting for us in the dark hall. With a motion that indicated silence, he led us up the stairs to the second floor, and quickly opened a door into what seemed to be a fair-sized private dining-room. A man was pacing the floor nervously. On a table was some food, untouched. As the door opened I thought he started as if in fear, and I am sure his dark face blanched,

(From "The Silent Bullet," by Arthur B. Reeve. Copyright, 1910, by Harper and Brothers, New York.)

if only for an instant. Imagine our surprise at seeing Gennaro, the great tenor, with whom merely to have a speaking acquaintance was to argue oneself famous.

"Oh, it is you, Luigi," he exclaimed in perfect English, rich and mellow. "And who are these gentlemen?"

Luigi merely replied, "Friends," in English also, and then dropped off into a voluble, low-toned explanation in Italian.

I could see, as we waited, that the same idea had flashed over Kennedy's mind as over my own. It was now three or four days since the papers had reported the strange kidnapping of Gennaro's five-year-old daughter Adelina, his only child, and the sending of a demand for ten thousand dollars ransom, signed, as usual, with the mystic Black Hand—a name to conjure with in blackmail and extortion.

As Signor Gennaro advanced toward us, after his short talk with Luigi, almost before the introductions were over, Kennedy anticipated him by saying: "I understand, Signor, before you ask me. I have read all about it in the papers. You want someone to help you catch the criminals who are holding your little girl."

"No, no!" exclaimed Gennaro excitedly. "Not that. I want to get my daughter first. After that, catch them if you can—yes, I should like to have someone do it. But read this first and tell me what you think of it. How should I act to get my little Adelina back without harming a hair of her head?" The famous singer drew from a capacious pocketbook a dirty, crumpled letter, scrawled on cheap paper.

Kennedy translated it quickly. It read:

Honourable sir: Your daughter is in safe hands. But, by the saints, if you give this letter to the police as you did the other, not only she but your family also, someone near to you, will suffer. We will not fail as we did Wednesday. If you want your daughter back, go yourself alone and without telling a soul, to Enrico Albano's Saturday night at the twelfth hour. You must provide

yourself with $10,000 in bills hidden in Saturday's *Il Progresso Italiano*. In the back room you will see a man sitting alone at a table. He will have a red flower on his coat. You are to say, "A fine opera is 'I Pagliacci.'" If he answers, "Not without Gennaro," lay the newspaper down on the table. He will pick it up, leaving his own, the *Bolletino*. On the third page you will find written the place where your daughter has been left waiting for you. Go immediately and get her. But, by the God, if you have so much as the shadow of the police near Enrico's your daughter will be sent to you in a box that night. Do not fear to come. We pledge our word to deal fairly if you deal fairly. This is a last warning. Lest you shall forget we will show one other sign of our power to-morrow.

LA MANO NERA.

The end of this ominous letter was gruesomely decorated with a skull and cross-bones, a rough drawing of a dagger thrust through a bleeding heart, a coffin, and, under all, a huge black hand. There was no doubt about the type of letter that it was. It was such as have of late years become increasingly common in all our large cities, baffling the best detectives.

"You have not showed this to the police, I presume?" asked Kennedy.

"Naturally not."

"Are you going Saturday night?"

"I am afraid to go and afraid to stay away," was the reply, and the voice of the fifty-thousand-dollars-a-season tenor was as human as that of a five-dollar-a-week father, for at bottom all men, high or low, are one.

"'We will not fail as we did Wednesday,'" reread Craig. "What does that mean?"

Gennaro fumbled in his pocketbook again, and at last drew forth a typewritten letter bearing the letter-head of the Leslie Laboratories, Incorporated.

"After I received the first threat," explained Gennaro, "my wife and I went from our apartments at the hotel to her father's, the banker Cesare, you know, who lives on

Fifth Avenue. I gave the letter to the Italian Squad of the police. The next morning my father-in-law's butler noticed something peculiar about the milk. He barely touched some of it to his tongue, and he has been violently ill ever since. I at once sent the milk to the laboratory of my friend Doctor Leslie to have it analyzed. This letter shows what the household escaped."

"My dear Gennaro," read Kennedy. "The milk submitted to us for examination on the 10th inst. has been carefully analysed, and I beg to hand you herewith the result:

"Specific gravity 1.036 at 15 degrees Cent.

Water	84.60	per cent.
Casein	3.49	" "
Albumin	.56	" "
Globulin	1.32	" "
Lactose	5.08	" "
Ash	.72	" "
Fat	3.42	" "
Ricin	1.19	" "

"Ricin is a new and little-known poison derived from the shell of the castor-oil bean. Professor Ehrlich states that one gram of the pure poison will kill 1,500,000 guinea pigs. Ricin was lately isolated by Professor Robert, of Rostock, but is seldom found except in an impure state, though still very deadly. It surpasses strychnin, prussic acid, and other commonly known drugs. I congratulate you and yours on escaping and shall of course respect your wishes absolutely regarding keeping secret this attempt on your life. Believe me,

"Very sincerely yours.

"C. W. Leslie."

As Kennedy handed the letter back, he remarked significantly: "I can see very readily why you don't care to have the police figure in your case. It has got quite beyond ordinary police methods."

"And to-morrow, too, they are going to give another

sign of their power," groaned Gennaro, sinking into the chair before his untasted food.

"You say you have left your hotel?" inquired Kennedy.

"Yes. My wife insisted that we would be more safely guarded at the residence of her father, the banker. But we are afraid even there since the poison attempt. So I have come here secretly to Luigi, my old friend Luigi, who is preparing food for us, and in a few minutes one of Cesare's automobiles will be here, and I will take the food up to her—sparing no expense or trouble. She is heart-broken. It will kill her, Professor Kennedy, if anything happens to our little Adelina.

"Ah, sir, I am not poor myself. A month's salary at the opera-house, that is what they ask of me. Gladly would I give it, ten thousand dollars—all, if they asked it, of my contract with Herr Schleppencour, the director. But the police—bah!—they are all for catching the villains. What good will it do me if they catch them and my little Adelina is returned to me dead? It is all very well for the Anglo-Saxons to talk of justice and the law, but I am—what you call it?—an emotional Latin. I want my little daughter—and at any cost. Catch the villains afterward—yes. I will pay double then to catch them so that they cannot blackmail me again. Only first I want my daughter back."

"And your father-in-law?"

"My father-in-law, he has been among you long enough to be one of you. He has fought them. He has put up a sign in his banking-house, 'No money paid on threats.' But I say it is foolish. I do not know America as well as he, but I know this: the police never succeed—the ransom is paid without their knowledge, and they very often take the credit. I say, pay first, then I will swear a righteous vendetta—I will bring the dogs to justice with the money yet on them. Only show me how, show me how."

"First of all," replied Kennedy, "I want you to answer one question, truthfully, without reservation, as to a friend. I am your friend, believe me. Is there any person,

a relative or acquaintance of yourself or your wife or your father-in-law, whom you even have reason to suspect of being capable of extorting money from you in this way? I needn't say that that is the experience of the district attorney's office in the large majority of cases of this so-called Black Hand."

"No," replied the tenor without hesitation. "I know that, and I have thought about it. No, I can think of no one. I know you Americans often speak of the Black Hand as a myth coined originally by a newspaper writer. Perhaps it has no organisation. But, Professor Kennedy, to me it is no myth. What if the real Black Hand is any gang of criminals who choose to use that convenient name to extort money? Is it the less real? My daughter is gone!"

"Exactly," agreed Kennedy. "It is not a theory that confronts you. It is a hard, cold fact. I understand that perfectly. What is the address of this Albano's?"

Luigi mentioned a number on Mulberry Street, and Kennedy made a note of it.

"It is a gambling saloon," explained Luigi. "Albano is a Neapolitan, a Camorrista, one of my countrymen of whom I am thoroughly ashamed, Professor Kennedy."

"Do you think this Albano had anything to do with the letter?"

Luigi shrugged his shoulders.

Just then a big limousine was heard outside. Luigi picked up a huge hamper that was placed in a corner of the room and, followed closely by Signor Gennaro, hurried down to it. As the tenor left us he grasped our hands in each of his.

"I have an idea in my mind," said Craig simply. "I will try to think it out in detail to-night. Where can I find you to-morrow?"

"Come to me at the opera-house in the afternoon, or if you want me sooner at Mr. Cesare's residence. Good-night, and a thousand thanks to you, Professor Kennedy, and to you, also, Mr. Jameson. I trust you absolutely because Luigi trusts you."

We sat in the little dining-room until we heard the door of the limousine bang shut and the car shoot off with the rattle of the changing gears.

"One more question, Luigi," said Craig as the door opened again. "I have never been on that block in Mulberry Street where this Albano's is. Do you happen to know any of the shopkeepers on it or near it?"

"I have a cousin who has a drug-store on the corner below Albano's, on the same side of the street."

"Good! Do you think he would let me use his store for a few minutes Saturday night—of course without any risk to himself?"

"I think I could arrange it."

"Very well. Then to-morrow, say at nine in the morning, I will stop here, and we will all go over to see him. Good-night, Luigi, and many thanks for thinking of me in connection with this case. I've enjoyed Signor Gennaro's singing often enough at the opera to want to render him this service, and I'm only too glad to be able to be of service to all honest Italians; that is, if I succeed in carrying out a plan I have in mind."

A little before nine the following day Kennedy and I dropped into Luigi's again. Kennedy was carrying a suitcase which he had taken over from his laboratory to our rooms the night before. Luigi was waiting for us, and without losing a minute we sallied forth.

By means of the tortuous twists of streets in old Greenwich village we came out at last on Bleecker Street and began walking east amid the hurly-burly of races of lower New York. We had not quite reached Mulberry Street when our attention was attracted by a large crowd on one of the busy corners, held back by a cordon of police who were endeavouring to keep the people moving with that burly good nature which the six-foot Irish policeman displays toward the five-foot burden-bearers of southern and eastern Europe who throng New York.

Apparently, we saw, as we edged up into the front of the crowd, here was a building whose whole front had literally been torn off and wrecked. The thick plate-glass

of the windows was smashed to a mass of greenish splinters on the sidewalk, while the windows of the upper floors and for several houses down the block in either street were likewise broken. Some thick iron bars which had formerly protected the windows were now bent and twisted. A huge hole yawned in the floor inside the doorway, and peering in we could see the desks and chairs a tangled mass of kindling.

"What's the matter?" I inquired of an officer near me, displaying my reporter's fire-line badge, more for its moral effect than in the hope of getting any real information in these days of enforced silence toward the press.

"Black Hand bomb," was the laconic reply.

"Whew!" I whistled. "Anyone hurt?"

"They don't usually kill anyone, do they?" asked the officer by way of reply to test my acquaintance with such things.

"No," I admitted. "They destroy more property than lives. But did they get anyone this time? This must have been a thoroughly overloaded bomb, I should judge by the looks of things."

"Came pretty close to it. The bank hadn't any more than opened when, bang! went this gas-pipe-and-dynamite thing. Crowd collected before the smoke had fairly cleared. Man who owns the bank was hurt, but not badly. Now come, beat it down to headquarters if you want to find out any more. You'll find it printed on the pink slips—the 'squeal book'—by this time. 'Gainst the rules for me to talk," he added with a good-natured grin, then to the crowd: "G'wan, now. You're blockin' traffic. Keep movin'."

I turned to Craig and Luigi. Their eyes were riveted on the big gilt sign, half broken, and all askew overhead. It read:

CIRO DI CESARE & CO., BANKERS
NEW YORK, GENOA, NAPLES, ROME, PALERMO

"This is the reminder so that Gennaro and his father-in-law will not forget," I gasped.

"Yes," added Craig, pulling us away, "and Cesare himself is wounded, too. Perhaps that was for putting up the notice refusing to pay. Perhaps not. It's a queer case —they usually set the bombs off at night when no one is around. There must be more back of this than merely to scare Gennaro. It looks to me as if they were after Cesare, too, first by poison, then by dynamite."

We shouldered our way out through the crowd and went on until we came to Mulberry Street, pulsing with life. Down we went past the little shops, dodging the children, and making way for women with huge bundles of sweat-shop clothing accurately balanced on their heads or hugged up under their capacicus capes. Here was just one little colony of the hundreds of thousands of Italians —a population larger than the Italian population of Rome —of whose life the rest of New York knew and cared nothing.

At last we came to Albano's little wine-shop, a dark, evil, malodorous place on the street level of a five-story, alleged "new-law" tenement. Without hesitation Kennedy entered, and we followed, acting the part of a slumming party. There were a few customers at this early hour, men out of employment and an inoffensive-looking lot, though of course they eyed us sharply. Albano himself proved to be a greasy, low-browed fellow who had a sort of cunning look. I could well imagine such a fellow spreading terror in the hearts of simple folk by merely pressing both temples with his thumbs and drawing his long bony fore-finger under his throat—the so-called Black Hand sign that has shut up many a witness in the middle of his testimony even in open court.

We pushed through to the low-ceilinged back room, which was empty, and sat down at a table. Over a bottle of Albano's famous California "red ink" we sat silently. Kennedy was making a mental note of the place. In the middle of the ceiling was a single gas-burner with a big reflector over it. In the back wall of the room was a horizontal oblong window, barred, and with a sash that opened like a transom. The tables were dirty and the

chairs rickety. The walls were bare and unfinished, with beams innocent of decoration. Altogether it was as unprepossessing a place as I had ever seen.

Apparently satisfied with his scrutiny, Kennedy got up to go, complimenting the proprietor on his wine. I could see that Kennedy had made up his mind as to his course of action.

"How sordid crime really is," he remarked as we walked on down the street. "Look at that place of Albano's. I defy even the police news reporter on the *Star* to find any glamour in that."

Our next stop was at the corner at the little store kept by the cousin of Luigi, who conducted us back of the partition where prescriptions were compounded, and found us chairs.

A hurried explanation from Luigi brought a cloud to the open face of the druggist, as if he hesitated to lay himself and his little fortune open to the blackmailers. Kennedy saw it and interrupted.

"All that I wish to do," he said, "is to put in a little instrument here and use it to-night for a few minutes. Indeed, there will be no risk to you, Vincenzo. Secrecy is what I desire, and no one will ever know about it."

Vincenzo was at length convinced, and Craig opened his suit-case. There was little in it except several coils of insulated wire, some tools, a couple of packages wrapped up, and a couple of pairs of overalls. In a moment Kennedy had donned overalls and was smearing dirt and grease over his face and hands. Under his direction I did the same.

Taking the bag of tools, the wire, and one of the small packages, we went out on the street and then up through the dark and ill-ventilated hall of the tenement. Half-way up a woman stopped us suspiciously.

"Telephone company," said Craig curtly. "Here's permission from the owner of the house to string wires across the roof."

He pulled an old letter out of his pocket, but as it was too dark to read even if the woman had cared to do so,

we went on up as he had expected, unmolested. At last we came to the roof, where there were some children at play a couple of houses down from us.

Kennedy began by dropping two strands of wire down to the ground in the back yard behind Vincenzo's shop. Then he proceeded to lay two wires along the edge of the roof.

We had worked only a little while when the children began to collect. However, Kennedy kept right on until we reached the tenement next to that in which Albano's shop was.

"Walter," he whispered, "just get the children away for a minute now."

"Look here, you kids," I yelled, "some of you will fall off if you get so close to the edge of the roof. Keep back."

It had no effect. Apparently they looked not a bit frightened at the dizzy mess of clothes-lines below us.

"Say, is there a candy-store on this block?" I asked in desperation.

"Yes, sir," came the chorus.

"Who'll go down and get me a bottle of ginger ale?" I asked.

A chorus of voices and glittering eyes was the answer. They all would. I took a half-dollar from my pocket and gave it to the oldest.

"All right now, hustle along, and divide the change."

With the scamper of many feet they were gone, and we were alone. Kennedy had now reached Albano's, and as soon as the last head had disappeared below the scuttle of the roof he dropped two long strands down into the back yard, as he had done at Vincenzo's.

I started to go back, but he stopped me.

"Oh, that will never do," he said. "The kids will see that the wires end here. I must carry them on several houses farther as a blind and trust to luck that they don't see the wires leading down below."

We were several houses down, still putting up wires when the crowd came shouting back, sticky with cheap

trust-made candy and black with East Side chocolate. We opened the ginger ale and forced ourselves to drink it so as to excite no suspicion, then a few minutes later descended the stairs of the tenement, coming out just above Albano's.

I was wondering how Kennedy was going to get into Albano's again without exciting suspicion. He solved it neatly.

"Now, Walter, do you think you could stand another dip into that red ink of Albano's?"

I said I might in the interests of science and justice—not otherwise.

"Well, your face is sufficiently dirty," he commented, "so that with the overalls you don't look very much as you did the first time you went in. I don't think they will recognise you. Do I look pretty good?"

"You look like a coal-heaver out of a job," I said. "I can scarcely restrain my admiration."

"All right. Then take this little glass bottle. Go into the back room and order something cheap, in keeping with your looks. Then when you are all alone break the bottle. It is full of gas drippings. Your nose will dictate what to do next. Just tell the proprietor you saw the gas company's wagon on the next block and come up here and tell me."

I entered. There was a sinister-looking man, with a sort of unscrupulous intelligence, writing at a table. As he wrote and puffed at his cigar, I noticed a scar on his face, a deep furrow running from the lobe of his ear to his mouth. That, I knew, was a brand set upon him by the Camorra. I sat and smoked and sipped slowly for several minutes, cursing him inwardly more for his presence than for his evident look of the "*mala vita.*" At last he went out to ask the barkeeper for a stamp.

Quickly I tiptoed over to another corner of the room and ground the little bottle under my heel. Then I resumed my seat. The odour that pervaded the room was sickening.

The sinister-looking man with the scar came in again

and sniffed. I sniffed. Then the proprietor came in and sniffed.

"Say," I said in the toughest voice I could assume, "you got a leak. Wait. I seen the gas company wagon on the next block when I came in. I'll get the man."

I dashed out and hurried up the street to the place where Kennedy was waiting impatiently. Rattling his tools, he followed me with apparent reluctance.

As he entered the wine-shop he snorted, after the manner of gas-men, "Where's de leak?"

"You find-a da leak," grunted Albano. "What-a you get-a you pay for? You want-a me do your work?"

"Well, half a dozen o' you wops get out o' here, that's all. D'youse all wanter be blown ter pieces wid dem pipes and cigarettes? Clear out," growled Kennedy.

They retreated precipitately, and Craig hastily opened his bag of tools.

"Quick, Walter, shut the door and hold it," exclaimed Craig, working rapidly. He unwrapped a little package and took out a round, flat disc-like thing of black vulcanised rubber. Jumping up on a table, he fixed it to the top of the reflector over the gas-jet.

"Can you see that from the floor, Walter?" he asked under his breath.

"No," I replied, "not even when I know it is there."

Then he attached a couple of wires to it and led them across the ceiling toward the window, concealing them carefully by sticking them in the shadow of a beam. At the window he quickly attached the wires to the two that were dangling down from the roof and shoved them around out of sight.

"We'll have to trust that no one sees them," he said. "That's the best I can do at such short notice. I never saw a room so bare as this, anyway. There isn't another place I could put that thing without its being seen."

We gathered up the broken glass of the gas-drippings bottle, and I opened the door.

"It's all right, now," said Craig, sauntering out before the bar. "Only de next time you has anyt'ing de matter

call de company up. I ain't supposed to do dis wit'out orders, see?"

A moment later I followed, glad to get out of the oppressive atmosphere, and joined him in the back of Vincenzo's drug-store, where he was again at work. As there was no back window there, it was quite a job to lead the wires around the outside from the back yard and in at a side window. It was at last done, however, without exciting suspicion, and Kennedy attached them to an oblong box of weathered oak and a pair of specially constructed dry batteries.

"Now," said Craig, as we washed off the stains of work and stowed the overalls back in the suit-case, "that is done to my satisfaction. Now I can safely tell Gennaro to go ahead and meet the Black-Handers."

From Vincenzo's we walked over toward Centre Street, where Kennedy and I left Luigi to return to his restaurant, with instructions to be at Vincenzo's at half-past eleven that night.

We turned into the new police headquarters and went down the long corridor to the Italian Bureau. Kennedy sent in his card to Lieutenant Giuseppe in charge, and we were quickly admitted. The lieutenant was a short, full-faced, fleshy Italian, with lightish hair and eyes that were apparently dull, until you suddenly discovered that that was merely a cover to their really restless way of taking in everything and fixing the impressions on his mind, as if on a sensitive plate.

"I want to talk about the Gennaro case," began Craig. "I may add that I have been rather closely associated with Inspector O'Connor of the Central Office on a number of cases, so that I think we can trust each other. Would you mind telling me what you know about it if I promise you that I, too, have something to reveal?"

The lieutenant leaned back and watched Kennedy closely without seeming to do so. "When I was in Italy last year," he replied at length, "I did a good deal of work in tracing up some Camorra suspects. I had a tip about some of them to look up their records—I needn't

say where it came from, but it was a good one. Much of the evidence against some of those fellows who are being tried at Viterbo was gathered by the Carabinieri as a result of hints that I was able to give them—clues that were furnished to me here in America from the source I speak of. I suppose there is really no need to conceal it, though. The original tip came from a certain banker here in New York."

"I can guess who it was," nodded Craig.

"Then, as you know, this banker is a fighter. He is the man who organised the White Hand—an organisation which is trying to rid the Italian population of the Black Hand. His society had a lot of evidence regarding former members of both the Camorra in Naples and the Mafia in Sicily, as well as the Black Hand gangs in New York, Chicago, and other cities. Well, Cesare, as you know, is Gennaro's father-in-law.

"While I was in Naples looking up the record of a certain criminal I heard of a peculiar murder committed some years ago. There was an honest old music master who apparently lived the quietest and most harmless of lives, But it became known that he was supported by Cesare and had received handsome presents of money from him. The old man was, as you may have guessed, the first music teacher of Gennaro, the man who discovered him. One might have been at a loss to see how he could have an enemy, but there was one who coveted his small fortune. One day he was stabbed and robbed. His murderer ran out into the street, crying out that the poor man had been killed. Naturally a crowd rushed up in a moment, for it was in the middle of the day. Before the injured man could make it understood who had struck him the assassin was down the street and lost in the maze of old Naples where he well knew the houses of his friends who would hide him. The man who is known to have committed that crime—Francesco Paoli—escaped to New York. We are looking for him to-day. He is a clever man, far above the average—son of a doctor in a town a few miles from Naples, went to the university,

was expelled for some mad prank—in short, he was the black sheep of the family. Of course over here he is too high-born to work with his hands on a railroad or in a trench, and not educated enough to work at anything else. So he has been preying on his more industrious countrymen—a typical case of a man living by his wits with no visible means of support.

"Now I don't mind telling you in strict confidence," continued the lieutenant, "that it's my theory that old Cesare has seen Paoli here, knew he was wanted for that murder of the old music master, and gave me the tip to look up his record. At any rate Paoli disappeared right after I returned from Italy, and we haven't been able to locate him since. He must have found out in some way that the tip to look him up had been given by the White Hand. He had been a Camorrista, in Italy, and had many ways of getting information here in America."

He paused, and balanced a piece of cardboard in his hand.

"It is my theory of this case that if we could locate this Paoli we could solve the kidnapping of little Adelina Gennaro very quickly. That's his picture."

Kennedy and I bent over to look at it, and I started in surprise. It was my evil-looking friend with the scar on his cheek.

"Well," said Craig, quietly handing back the card, "whether or not he is the man, I know where we can catch the kidnappers to-night, Lieutenant."

It was Giuseppe's turn to show surprise now.

"With your assistance I'll get this man and the whole gang to-night," explained Craig, rapidly sketching over his plan and concealing just enough to make sure that no matter how anxious the lieutenant was to get the credit he could not spoil the affair by premature interference.

The final arrangement was that four of the best men of the squad were to hide in a vacant store across from Vincenzo's early in the evening, long before anyone was watching. The signal for them to appear was to be the extinguishing of the lights behind the coloured bottles in

the druggist's window. A taxicab was to be kept waiting at headquarters at the same time with three other good men ready to start for a given address the moment the alarm was given over the telephone.

We found Gennaro awaiting us with the greatest anxiety at the opera-house. The bomb at Cesare's had been the last straw. Gennaro had already drawn from his bank ten crisp one-thousand-dollar bills, and already had a copy of *Il Progresso* in which he had hidden the money between the sheets.

"Mr. Kennedy," he said, "I am going to meet them to-night. They may kill me. See, I have provided myself with a pistol—I shall fight, too, if necessary for my little Adelina. But if it is only money they want, they shall have it."

"One thing I want to say," began Kennedy.

"No, no, no!" cried the tenor. "I will go—you shall not stop me."

"I don't wish to stop you," Craig reassured him. "But one thing—do exactly as I tell you, and I swear not a hair of the child's head will be injured and we will get the blackmailers, too."

"How?" eagerly asked Gennaro. "What do you want me to do?"

"All I want you to do is to go to Albano's at the appointed time. Sit down in the backroom. Get into conversation with them, and, above all, Signor, as soon as you get the copy of the *Bolletino* turn to the third page, pretend not to be able to read the address. Ask the man to read it. Then repeat it after him. Pretend to be overjoyed. Offer to set up wine for the whole crowd. Just a few minutes, that is all I ask, and I will guarantee that you will be the happiest man in New York to-morrow."

Gennaro's eyes filled with tears as he grasped Kennedy's hand. "That is better than having the whole police force back of me," he said. "I shall never forget, never forget."

As we went out Kennedy remarked: "You can't blame them for keeping their troubles to themselves. Here we

send a police officer over to Italy to look up the records of some of the worst suspects. He loses his life. Another takes his place. Then after he gets back he is set to work on the mere clerical routine of translating them. One of his associates is reduced in rank. And so what does it come to? Hundreds of records have become useless because the three years within which the criminals could be deported have elapsed with nothing done. Intelligent, isn't it? I believe it has been established that all but about fifty of seven hundred known Italian suspects are still at large, mostly in this city. And the rest of the Italian population is guarded from them by a squad of police in number scarcely one-thirtieth of the number of known criminals. No, it's our fault if the Black Hand thrives."

We had been standing on the corner of Broadway, waiting for a car.

"Now, Walter, don't forget. Meet me at the Bleecker Street station of the subway at eleven-thirty. I'm off to the university. I have some very important experiments with phosphorescent salts that I want to finish to-day."

"What has that to do with the case?" I asked mystified.

"Nothing," replied Craig. "I didn't say it had. At eleven-thirty, don't forget. By George, though, that Paoli must be a clever one—think of his knowing about ricin. I only heard of it myself recently. Well, here's my car. Good-bye."

Craig swung aboard an Amsterdam Avenue car, leaving me to kill eight nervous hours of my weekly day of rest from the *Star*.

They passed at length, and at precisely the appointed time Kennedy and I met. With suppressed excitement, at least on my part, we walked over to Vincenzo's. At night this section of the city was indeed a black enigma. The lights in the shops where olive oil, fruit, and other things were sold, were winking out one by one; here and there strains of music floated out of wine-shops, and little groups lingered on corners conversing in animated sen-

tences. We passed Albano's on the other side of the street, being careful not to look at it too closely, for several men were hanging idly about—pickets, apparently, with some secret code that would instantly have spread far and wide the news of any alarming action.

At the corner we crossed and looked in Vincenzo's window a moment, casting a furtive glance across the street at the dark empty store where the police must be hiding. Then we went in and casually sauntered back of the partition. Luigi was there already. There were several customers still in the store, however, and therefore we had to sit in silence while Vincenzo quickly finished a prescription and waited on the last one.

At last the doors were locked and the lights lowered, all except those in the windows which were to serve as signals.

"Ten minutes to twelve," said Kennedy, placing the oblong box on the table. "Gennaro will be going in soon. Let us try this machine now and see if it works. If the wires have been cut since we put them up this morning Gennaro will have to take his chances alone."

Kennedy reached over and with a light movement of his forefinger touched a switch.

Instantly a babel of voices filled the store, all talking at once, rapidly and loudly. Here and there we could distinguish a snatch of conversation, a word, a phrase, now and then even a whole sentence above the rest. There was the clink of glasses. I could hear the rattle of dice on a bare table, and an oath. A cork popped. Somebody scratched a match.

We sat bewildered, looking at Kennedy for an explanation.

"Imagine that you are sitting at a table in Albano's back room," was all he said. "This is what you would be hearing. This is my 'electric ear'—in other words the dictograph, used, I am told, by the Secret Service of the United States. Wait, in a moment you will hear Gennaro come in. Luigi and Vincenzo, translate what you hear. My knowledge of Italian is pretty rusty."

"Can they hear us?" whispered Luigi in an awe-struck whisper.

Craig laughed. "No, not yet. But I have only to touch this other switch, and I could produce an effect in that room that would rival the famous writing on Belshazzar's wall—only it would be a voice from the wall instead of writing."

"They seem to be waiting for someone," said Vincenzo. "'I heard somebody say: 'He will be here in a few minutes. Now get out.'"

The babel of voices seemed to calm down as men withdrew from the room. Only one or two were left.

"One of them says the child is all right. She has been left in the back yard," translated Luigi.

"What yard? Did he say?" asked Kennedy.

"No; they just speak of it as the 'yard,'" replied Luigi.

"Jameson, go outside in the store to the telephone booth and call up headquarters. Ask them if the automobile is ready, with the men in it."

I rang up, and after a moment the police central answered that everything was right.

"Then tell central to hold the line clear—we mustn't lose a moment. Jameson, you stay in the booth. Vincenzo, you pretend to be working around your window, but not in such a way as to attract attention, for they have men watching the street very carefully. What is it, Luigi?"

"Gennaro is coming. I just heard one of them say, 'Here he comes.'"

Even from the booth I could hear the dictograph repeating the conversation in the dingy little back room of Albano's, down the street.

"He's ordering a bottle of red wine," murmured Luigi, dancing up and down with excitement.

Vincenzo was so nervous that he knocked a bottle down in the window, and I believe that my heart-beats were almost audible over the telephone which I was holding, for the police operator called me down for asking so many times if all was ready.

"There it is—the signal," cried Craig. "'A fine opera is "I Pagliacci."' Now listen for the answer."

A moment elapsed, then, "Not without Gennaro," came a gruff voice in Italian from the dictograph.

A silence ensued. It was tense.

"Wait, wait," said a voice which I recognised instantly as Gennaro's. "I cannot read this. What is this, 23½ Prince Street?"

"No, 33½. She has been left in the back yard," answered the voice.

"Jameson," called Craig, "tell them to drive straight to 33½ Prince Street. They will find the girl in the back yard—quick, before the Black-Handers have a chance to go back on their word."

I fairly shouted my orders to the police headquarters. "They're off," came back the answer, and I hung up the receiver.

"What was that?" Craig was asking of Luigi. "I didn't catch it. What did they say?"

"That other voice said to Gennaro, 'Sit down while I count this.'"

"Sh! he's talking again."

"If it is a penny less than ten thousand or I find a mark on the bills I'll call to Enrico, and your daughter will be spirited away again," translated Luigi.

"Now, Gennaro is talking," said Craig. "Good—he is gaining time. He is a trump. I can distinguish that all right. He's asking the gruff-voiced fellow if he will have another bottle of wine. He says he will. Good. They must be at Prince Street now—we'll give them a few minutes more, not too much, for word will be back to Albano's like wildfire, and they will get Gennaro after all. Ah, they are drinking again. What was that, Luigi? The money is all right, he says? Now, Vincenzo, out with the lights!"

A door banged open across the street, and four huge dark figures darted out in the direction of Albano's.

With his finger Kennedy pulled down the other switch and shouted: "Gennaro, this is Kennedy! To the street! *Polizia! Polizia!*"

A scuffle and a cry of surprise followed. A second voice, apparently from the bar, shouted: "Out with the lights, out with the lights!"

Bang! went a pistol, and another.

The dictograph, which had been all sound a moment before, was as mute as a cigar-box.

"What's the matter?" I asked Kennedy, as he rushed past me.

"They have shot out the lights. My receiving instrument is destroyed. Come on, Jameson; Vincenzo, stay back, if you don't want to appear in this."

A short figure rushed by me, faster even than I could go. It was the faithful Luigi.

In front of Albano's an exciting fight was going on. Shots were being fired wildly in the darkness, and heads were popping out of tenement windows on all sides. As Kennedy and I flung ourselves into the crowd we caught a glimpse of Gennaro, with blood streaming from a cut on his shoulder, struggling with a policeman while Luigi vainly was trying to interpose himself between them. A man, held by another policeman, was urging the first officer on. "That's the man," he was crying. "That's the kidnapper. I caught him."

In a moment Kennedy was behind him. "Paoli, you lie. You are the kidnapper. Seize him—he has the money on him. That other is Gennaro himself."

The policeman released the tenor, and both of them seized Paoli. The others were beating at the door, which was being frantically barricaded inside.

Just then a taxicab came swinging up the street. Three men jumped out and added their strength to those who were battering down Albano's barricade.

Gennaro, with a cry, leaped into the taxicab. Over his shoulder I could see a tangled mass of dark brown curls, and a childish voice lisped: "Why didn't you come for me, papa? The bad man told me if I waited in the yard you would come for me. But if I cried he said he would shoot me. And I waited, and waited—"

"There, there, 'Lina; papa's going to take you straight home to mother."

A crash followed as the door yielded, and the famous Paoli gang was in the hands of the law.

ARTHUR B. REEVE

THE VEILED PROPHETESS

"Do you believe in dreams?" Constance Dunlap looked searchingly at her interrogator, as if her face or manner betrayed some new side of her character.

Mrs. deForest Caswell was an attractive woman verging on forty, a chance acquaintance at a shoppers' tea room downtown who had proved to be an uptown neighbor.

"I have had some rather strange experiences, Mildred," confessed Constance tentatively. "Why?"

"Because—" the other woman hesitated, then added, "why should I not tell you? Last night, Constance, I had the strangest dream. It has left such an impression on me that I can't shake it off, although I have tried all day."

"Yes? Tell me about it."

Mildred Caswell paused a moment, then began slowly, as if not to omit anything from her story.

"I dreamt that Forest was dying. I could see him, could see the doctor and the nurse, everything. And yet somehow I could not get to him. I was afraid, with such an oppressive fear. I tried—oh, how I tried! I struggled, and how badly I felt!" and she shuddered at the very recollection.

"There seemed to be a wall," she resumed, "a narrow wall in the way and I couldn't get over it. As often as I tried, I fell. And then I seemed to be pursued by some kind of animal, half bull, half snake. I ran. It followed closely. I seemed to see a crowd of people and I felt that if I could only get to that crowd, somehow I would

(From "Constance Dunlap," by Arthur B. Reeve. Copyright, 1913, by Harper & Brothers, New York.)

be safe, perhaps might even get over the wall and—I woke up—almost screaming."

The woman's face was quite blanched.

"My dear," remonstrated Constance, "you must not take it so. Remember—it was only a dream."

"I know it was only a dream," she said, "but you don't know what is back of it."

Mildred Caswell had from time to time hinted to Constance of the growing incompatibility of her married life, but as Constance was getting used to confidences, she had kept silent, knowing that her friend would tell her in time.

"You must have guessed," faltered Mrs. Caswell, "that Forest and I are not—not on the best of terms, that we are getting further and further apart."

It rather startled Constance to hear frankly stated what she already had observed. She wondered how far the estrangement had gone. The fact was that she had rather liked deForest Caswell, although she had only met her friend's husband a few times. In fact she was surprised that momentarily there flashed through her mind the query as to whether Mildred herself might be altogether blameless in the growing uncongeniality.

Mildred Caswell had drawn out of her chatelaine a bit of newspaper and handed it to Constance, not as if it was of any importance to herself but as if it would explain better than she could tell what she meant.

Constance read:

MME. CASSANDRA,

THE VEILED PROPHETESS

Born with a double veil, educated in occult mysteries in Egypt and India. Without asking a question, tells your name and reads your secret troubles and the remedy. Reads your dreams. Great questions of life quickly solved. Failure turned to success, the separated brought together, advice on all affairs of life, love, marriage, divorce, business, speculation, and investments. Overcomes all evil influences. Ever ready to help

and advise those with capital to find a safe and paying investment. No fee until it succeeds. Could anything be fairer?

THE RETREAT,
—— W. 47th Street.

"Won't you come with me to Madame Cassandra?" asked Mrs. Caswell, as Constance finished reading. "She always seems to do me so much good."

"Who is Madame Cassandra?" asked Constance, re-reading the last part of the advertisement.

"I suppose you would call her a dream doctor," said Mildred.

It was a new idea to Constance, this of a dream doctor to settle the affairs of life. Only a moment she hesitated, then she answered simply, "Yes, I'll go."

"The retreat" was just off Longacre Square among quite a nest of fakers. A queue of automobiles before the place testified, however, to the prosperity of Madame Cassandra, as they entered the bronze grilled plate glass door and turned on the first floor toward the home of the Adept. Constance had an uncomfortable feeling as they entered of being watched behind the shades of the apartment. Still, they had no trouble in being admitted, and a soft-voiced colored attendant welcomed them.

The esoteric flat of Madame Cassandra was darkened except for the electric lights glowing in amber and rose-colored shades. There were several women there already. As they entered Constance had noticed a peculiar, dreamy odor. There did not seem to be any hurry, any such thing as time here, so skilfully was the place run. There was no noise; the feet sank in half-inch piles of rugs, and easy-chairs and divans were scattered about.

Once a puff of light smoke appeared, and Constance awoke to the fact that some were smoking little delicately gold-banded cigarettes. Indeed it was all quite recherché.

Mrs. Caswell took one from a maid. So did Constance, but after a puff or two managed to put it out and later to secure another which she kept.

Madame Cassandra herself proved to be a tall, slender, pale woman with dark hair and a magnetic eye, an eye that probably accounted more than anything else for her success. She was clad in a house gown of purplish silk which clung tightly to her, and at her throat a diamond pendant sparkled, as well as other brilliants on her long, slender fingers.

She met Mildred and Constance with outstretched hands.

"So glad to see you, my dears," purred Madame, leading the way into an inner sanctum.

Mrs. Caswell had seated herself with the air of one who worshiped at the shrine, while Constance gazed about curiously.

"Madame," she began a little tremulously, "I have had another of those dreadful dreams."

"You poor dear soul," soothed Madame, stroking her hand. "Tell me of it—all."

Quickly Mrs. Caswell poured forth her story as she had already told it to Constance.

"My dear Mrs. Caswell," remarked the high priestess slowly, when the story was complete, "it is all very simple. His love is dead. That is what you fear and it is the truth. The wall is the wall that he has erected against you. Try to forget it—to forget him. You would be better off. There are other things in the world—"

"Ah, but I cannot live as I am used to without money," murmured Mrs. Caswell.

"I know," replied Madame. "It is that that keeps many a woman with a brute. When financial and economic independence come, then woman will be free and only then. Now, listen. Would you like to be free—financially? You remember that delightful Mr. Davies who has been here? Yes? Well, he is a regular client of mine, now. He is a broker and never embarks in any enterprise without first consulting me. Just the other day I read his fortune in United Traction. It has gone up five points already and will go fifteen more. If you want, I will give you a card to him. Let me see—yes, I can do that. You too will be lucky in speculation."

Constance, with one ear open, had been busy looking about the room. In a bookcase she saw a number of books and paused to examine their titles. She was surprised to see among the old style dream books several works on modern psychology, particularly on the interpretation of dreams.

"Of course, Mrs. Caswell, I don't want to urge you," Madame was saying. "I have only pointed out a way in which you can be independent. And, you know, Mr. Davies is a perfect gentleman, so courteous and reliable. I know you will be successful if you take my advice and go to him."

Mildred said nothing for a few moments, but as she rose to go she remarked, "Thank you very much. I'll think about it. Anyhow, you've made me feel better."

"So kind of you to say it," murmured the Adept. "I'm sorry you must go, but really I have other appointments. Please come again—with your friend. Good-bye."

"What do you think of her?" asked Mrs. Caswell on the street.

"Very clever," answered Constance dubiously.

Mrs. Caswell looked up quickly. "You don't like her?"

"To tell the truth," confessed Constance quietly, "I have had too much experience in Wall Street myself to trust to a clairvoyant."

They had scarcely reached the corner before Constance again had that peculiar feeling which some psychologists have noted, of being stared at. She turned, but saw no one. Still the feeling persisted. She could stand it no longer.

"Don't think me crazy, Mildred," she said, "but I just have a desire to walk back a block."

Constance had turned suddenly. As she glanced keenly about she was aware of a familiar figure gazing into the window of an art store across the street. He had stopped so that although his back was turned he could, by a slight shift of his position, still see by means of a mirror in the window what was going on across the street behind him.

One look was enough. It was Drummond, the detective. What did it mean?

Neither woman said much as they rode uptown, and parted on the respective floors of their apartment house. Still Constance could not get out of her head the recollection of the dream doctor and of Drummond.

Restless, she determined that night to go down to the Public Library and see whether any of the books at the clairvoyant's were on the shelves. Fortunately she found some, found, indeed, that they were not all, as she had half suspected, the works of fakers but that quite a literature had been built up around the new psychology of dreams.

Deeply she delved into the fascinating subjects that had been opened by the studies of the famous Dr. Sigmund Freud of Vienna, and as she read she found that she began to understand much about Mrs. Caswell—and, with a start, about her own self.

At first she revolted against the unpleasant feature of the new dream philosophy—the irresistible conclusion that all humanity, underneath the shell, is sensuous or sensual in nature, that practically all dreams portray some delight of the senses and that sexual dreams are a large proportion of all visions. But the more she thought of it, the more clearly was she able to analyze Mrs. Caswell's dream and to get back at the causes of it, in the estrangement from her husband and perhaps the brutality of his ignorance of woman. And then, too, there was Drummond. What was he doing in the case?

She did not see Mildred Caswell again until the following afternoon. But then she seemed unusually bright in contrast with the depression of the day before. Constance was not surprised. Her intuition told her that something had happened and she hardly needed to guess that Mrs. Caswell had followed the advice of the clairvoyant and had been to see the wonderful Mr. Davies, to whom the mysteries of the stock market were an open book.

"Have you had any other dreams?" asked Constance casually.

"Yes," replied Mildred, "but not like the one that depressed me. Last night I had a very pleasant dream. It

seemed that I was breakfasting with Mr. Davies. I remember that there was a hot coal fire in the grate. Then suddenly a messenger came in with news that United Traction had advanced twenty points. Wasn't it strange?"

Constance said nothing. In fact it did not seem strange to her at all. The strange thing to her, now that she was a sort of amateur dream reader herself, was that Mrs. Caswell did not seem to see the real import of her own dream.

"You have seen Mr. Davies to-day?" Constance ventured.

Mrs. Caswell laughed. "I wasn't going to tell you. You seemed too set against speculating in Wall Street. But since you ask me, I may as well admit it."

"When did you see him before?" went on Constance. "Did you have much invested with him already?"

Mrs. Caswell glanced up, startled. "My—you are positively uncanny, Constance. How did you know I had seen him before?"

"One seldom dreams," said Constance, "about anything unless it has been suggested by an event of the day before. You saw him to-day. That would not have inspired the dream of last night. Therefore I concluded that you must have seen him and invested before. Madame Cassandra's mention of him yesterday caused the dream of last night. The dream of last night probably influenced you to see him again to-day, and you invested in United Traction. That is the way dreams work. Probably more of conduct than we know is influenced by dream life. Now, if you should get fifteen or twenty points you would be in a fair way to join the ranks of those who believe that dreams do come true."

Mrs. Caswell looked at her almost alarmed, then attempted to turn it off with a laugh, "And perhaps breakfast with him?"

"When I do set up as interpreter of dreams," answered Constance simply, "I'll tell you more."

On one point she had made up her mind. That was to visit Mr. Davies herself the next day.

She found his office a typical bucket shop, even down to having a section partitioned off for women clients of the firm. She had not intended to risk anything, and so was prepared when Mr. Davies himself approached her courteously. Instinctively Constance distrusted him. He was too cordial, too polite. She could feel the claws hidden in his velvety paw, as it were. There was a debonaire assurance about him, the air of a man who thought he understood women, and indeed did understand a certain type. But to Constance, who was essentially a man's woman, Davies was only revolting.

She managed to talk without committing herself, and he in his complacency was glad to hope that he was making a new customer. She had to be careful not to betray any of the real and extensive knowledge about Wall Street which she actually possessed. But the glib misrepresentations about United Traction quite amazed her.

When she rose to go, Davies accompanied her to the door, then out into the hall to the elevator. As he bent over to shake hands, she noted that he held her hand just a little longer than was necessary.

"He's a swindler of the first water," she concluded as she was whisked down in the elevator. "I'm sure Mildred is in badly with this crowd, one urging her on in her trouble, the other making it worse and fleecing her into the bargain."

At the entrance she paused, undecided which was the quickest route home. As by chance she turned just for a moment she thought she caught a fleeting glimpse of Drummond dodging behind a pillar. It was only for an instant but even that apparition was enough.

"I will get her out of this safely," resolved Constance. "I will keep one more fly from his web."

Constance felt as if, even now, she must see Mildred and, although she knew nothing, at least put her on her guard. She did not have long to wait for her chance. It was late in the afternoon when her door buzzer sounded.

"Constance, I've been looking for you all day," sighed Mildred, dropping sobbing into a chair. "I am—distracted."

"Why, my dear, what's the matter?" asked Constance. "Let me make you a cup of coffee."

Over the steaming little cups Mildred grew more calm.

"Forest has found out in some way that I am speculating in Wall Street," she confided at length. "I suppose some of his friends—he has lots down there—told him."

Momentarily the picture of Drummond back of the post in Davies' building flashed over Constance.

"And he is awfully angry. Oh, I never knew him to be so angry—and sarcastic, too."

"Was it wholly over your money?" asked Constance. "Was there nothing else?"

Mrs. Caswell started. "You grow more weird, every day, Constance. Yes—there was something else."

"Mr. Davies?"

Mildred had risen. "Don't—don't—"she cried.

"Then you do really—care for him?" asked Constance mercilessly.

"No—no, a thousand times—no. How can I? I have put all such thoughts out of my mind—long ago." She paused, then went on more calmly, "Constance, believe me or not—I am just as good a woman to-day as I was the day I married Forest. No—I would not even let the thought enter my head—never!"

For perhaps an hour after her friend had gone, Constance sat thinking. What should she do? Something must be done and soon. As she thought, suddenly the truth flashed over her.

Caswell had employed Drummond to shadow his wife in the hope that he might unearth something that might lead to a divorce. Drummond, like so many divorce detectives, was not averse to guiding events, to put it mildly. He had ingratiated himself, perhaps, with the clairvoyant and Davies. Constance had often heard before of clairvoyants and brokers who worked in conjunction to fleece the credulous. Now another and more serious element than the loss of money was involved. Added to them was a divorce detective—and honor itself was at stake. She remembered the doped cigarettes. She had heard of them

before at clairvoyants'. She saw it all—Madame Cassandra playing on Mildred's wounded affections, the broker on both that and her desire to be independent—and Drummond pulling the wires that all might take advantage of her woman's frailty.

That moment Constance determined on action.

First she telephoned to deForest Caswell at his office. It was an unconventional thing to do to ask him to call, but she made some plausible pretext. She was surprised to find that he accepted it without hesitating. It set her thinking. Drummond must have told him something of her and he had thought this as good a time as any to face her. In that case Drummond would probably come too. She was prepared.

She had intended to have one last talk with Mildred, but had no need to call her. Utterly wretched, the poor little woman came in again to see her as she had done scores of times before, to pour out her heart. Forest had not come home to dinner, had not even taken the trouble to telephone. Constance did not say that she herself was responsible.

"Do you really want to know the truth about your dreams?" asked Constance, after she had prevailed upon Mildred to eat a little.

"I do know," she returned.

"No, you don't," went on Constance, now determined to tell her the truth whether she liked it or not. "That clairvoyant and Mr. Davies are in league, playing you for a sucker, as they say."

Mrs. Caswell did not reply for a moment. Then she drew a long breath and shut her eyes. "Oh, you don't know how true what she says is to me. She—"

"Listen," interrupted Constance. "Mildred, I'm going to be frank, brutally frank. Madame Cassandra has read your character, not the character as you think it is, but your unconscious, subconscious self. She knows that there is no better way to enter into the intimate life of a client, according to the new psychology, than by getting at and analyzing the dreams. And she knows that you can't go

far in dream analysis without finding sex. It is one of the strongest natural impulses, yet subject to the strongest repression, and hence one of the weakest points of our culture.

"She is actually helping along your alienation for that broker. You yourself have given me the clue in your dreams. Only I am telling you the truth about them. She holds it back and tells you plausible falsehoods to help her own ends. She is trying to arouse in you those passions which you have suppressed, and she has not scrupled to use drugged cigarettes with you and others to do it. You remember the breakfast dream, when I said that much could be traced back to dreams? A thing happens. It causes a dream. That in turn sometimes causes action. No, don't interrupt. Let me finish first.

"Take that first dream," continued Constance, rapidly thrusting home her interpretation so that it would have its full effect. "You dreamed that your husband was dying and you were afraid. She said it meant love was dead. It did not. The fact is that neurotic fear in a woman has its origin in repressed, unsatisfied love, love which for one reason or another is turned away from its object and has not succeeded in being applied. Then his death. That simply means that you have a feeling that you might be happier if he were away and didn't devil you. It is a survival of childhood, when death is synonymous with absence. I know you don't believe it. But if you had studied the subject as I have in the last few days you'd understand. Madame Cassandra understands.

"And the wall. That was Wall Street, probably, which does divide you two. You tried to get over it and you fell. That means your fear of actually falling, morally, of being a fallen woman."

Mildred was staring wildly. She might deny but in her heart she must admit.

"The thing that pursued you, half bull, half snake, was Davies and his blandishments. I have seen him. I know what he is. The crowd in a dream always denotes a secret. He is pursuing you, as in the dream. But he hasn't caught

you. He thinks there is in you the same wild demimondaine instinct that with many an ardent woman slumbers unknown in the back of her mind.

"Whatever you may say, you do think of him. When a woman dreams of breakfasting cozily with some other than her husband it has an obvious meaning. As for the messenger and the message about the United Traction, there, too, was a plain wish, and, as you must see, wishes in one form or another, disguised or distorted, lie at the basis of dreams. Take the coal fire. That, too, is susceptible of interpretation. I think you must have heard the couplet:

> " 'No coal, no fire so hotly glows
> As the secret love that no one knows.' "

Mildred Caswell had risen, an indignant flush on her face.

Constance put her hand on her arm gently to restrain her, knowing that such indignation was the first sign that she had struck at the core of truth in her interpretation.

"My dear," she urged, "I'm only telling you the truth, for your own sake, and not to take advantage of you as Madame Cassandra is doing. Please—remember that the best evidence of your normal condition is just what I find, that absence of love would be abnormal. My dear, you are what the psychologists call a consciously frigid, unconsciously passionate woman. Consciously you reject this Davis; unconsciously you accept him. And it is the more dangerous, although you do not know it, because some one else is watching. It was not one of his friends who told your husband—"

Mrs. Caswell had paled. "Is—is there a—detective?" she faltered.

Constance nodded.

Mildred had collapsed completely. She was sobbing in a chair, her head bowed in her hands, her little lace handkerchief soaked.

"What shall I do? What shall I do?"

There was a sudden tap at the door.

"Quick—in there," whispered Constance, shoving her through the portières into the drawing room.

It was Forest Caswell.

For a moment Constance stood irresolute, wondering just how to meet him, then she said, "Good evening, Mr. Caswell. I hope you will pardon me for asking you to call on me, but as you know, I've come to know your wife —perhaps better than you do."

"Not better," he corrected, seeming to see that it was directness that she was aiming at. "It is bad enough to get mixed up badly in Wall Street, but what would you yourself say—you are a business woman—what would you say about getting into the clutches of a—a dream doctor—and worse?"

He had put Constance on the defensive in a sentence.

"Don't you ever dream?" she asked quietly. He looked at her a moment as if doubting even her mentality.

"Good-night!" he exclaimed in disgust, "you, too, defend it?"

"But, don't you dream?" she persisted.

"Why, of course, I dream," he answered somewhat petulantly. "What of it? I don't guide my actions by it."

"Do you ever dream of Mildred?" she asked.

"Sometimes," he admitted reluctantly.

"Ever of other—er—people?" she pursued.

"Yes," he replied, "sometimes of other people. But what has that to do with it? I cannot help my dreams. My conduct I can help and I do help."

Constance had not expected him to be frank to the extent of taking her into his confidence. Still, she felt that he had told her just enough. She discerned a vague sense of jealousy in his tone which told her more than words that whatever he might have said or done to Mildred he resented, unconsciously, the manner in which she had striven to gain sympathy outside.

"Fortunately he knows nothing of the new theories," she said to herself.

"Mrs. Dunlap," he resumed, "since you have been frank

with me, I must be equally frank with you. I think you are far too sensible a woman not to understand in just what a peculiar position my wife has placed me."

He had taken out of his pocket a few sheets of closely typewritten tissue paper. He did not look at them. Evidently he knew the contents by heart. Constance did not need to be told that this was a sheaf of the daily reports of the agency for which Drummond worked.

He paused. She had been watching him searchingly. She was determined not to let him justify himself first.

"Mr. Caswell," she persisted in a low, earnest tone, "don't be so sure that there is nothing in this dream business. Before you read me those reports from Mr. Drummond, let me finish."

Forest Caswell almost dropped them in surprise.

"Dreams," she continued, seeing her advantage, "are wishes, either suppressed or expressed. Sometimes the dream is frank and shows an expressed wish. Other times it shows a suppressed wish, or a wish which in its fulfilment in the dream is disguised or distorted.

"You are the cause of your wife's dreams. She feels in them anxiety. And, according to the modern psychologists who have studied dreams carefully and scientifically, fear and anxiety represent love repressed or suppressed."

She paused to emphasize the point, glad to note that he was following her.

"That clairvoyant," she went on, "has found out the truth. True, it may not have been the part of wisdom for Mildred to go to her in the first place. I pass over that. I do not know whether you or she was most to blame at the start. But that woman, in the guise of being her friend, has played on every string of your wife's lonely heart, which you have wrung until it vibrates.

"Then," she hastened on, "came your precious friend Drummond, Drummond who has, no doubt, told you a pack of lies about me. You see that?"

She had flung down on the table a cigarette which she had managed to get at Madame Cassandra's.

"Smoke it."

He lighted it gingerly, took a puff or two, puckered his face, frowned, and rubbed the lighted end on the fireplace to extinguish it.

"What is it?" he asked suspiciously.

"Hashish," she answered tersely. "Things were not going fast enough to suit either Madame Cassandra or Drummond. Madame Cassandra helped along the dreams by a drug noted for its effect on the passions. More than that," added Constance, leaning over toward him and catching his eye, "Madame Cassandra was working in league with a broker, as so many of the fakers do. Drummond knew it, whether he told you the truth about it or not. That broker was a swindler named Davies."

She was watching the effect on him. She saw that he had been reserving this for a last shot at her, that he realized she had stolen his own ammunition and appropriated it to herself.

"They were only too glad when Drummond approached them. There you are, three against that poor little woman —no, four, including yourself. Perhaps she was foolish. But it was not so much to her discredit as to those who cast her adrift when she had a natural right to protection. Here was a woman with passions which she herself did not understand, and a little money—alone. Her case appealed to me. I knew her dreams. I studied them."

Caswell was listening in amazement. "It is dangerous to be with a person who pays attention to such little things," he said.

Evidently Drummond himself must have been listening. The door buzzer sounded and he stepped in, perhaps to bolster up his client in case he should be weakening.

As he met Constance's eye he smiled superciliously and was about to speak. But she did not give him time even to say good evening.

"Ask him," she cried, her eyes flashing, for she realized that it had been part of the plan to confront her, perhaps worm out of her just enough to confirm Drummond's own story to Caswell, "ask him to tell the truth—if he is capable of it—not the truth that will make a good daily

report of a hired shadow who colors his report the way he thinks his client desires it, but the real truth."

"Mr. Caswell," interrupted Drummond, "this woman—"

"Mr. Drummond," cried Constance, rising and shaking the burnt stub of the little gold-banded cigarette at him to impress it on his mind, "Mr. Drummond, I don't care whether I am a—a she-devil"—she almost hissed the words at him—"but I have evidence enough to go before the district attorney of this city and the grand jury and get indictments for conspiracy against a certain clairvoyant and a bucket shop operator. To save themselves, they will probably tell all they know about a certain crook who has been using them."

Caswell looked at her, amazed at her denunciation of the detective. As for Drummond, he turned his back on her as if to ignore her utterly.

"Mr. Caswell," he said bitterly, "in those reports—"

"Forest Caswell," insisted Constance, rising and facing him, "if you have in that heart of yours one shred of manhood it should move you. You—this man—the others—have placed in the path of a woman every provocation, every temptation for financial, physical, and moral ruin. She has consulted a clairvoyant—yes. She has speculated—yes. Yet she was proof against something greater than that. And I know—because I know her unconscious self which her dreams reveal, her inmost soul—I know her better than you do, better than she does herself. I know that even now she is as good and true and would be as loving as—"

Constance nad paused and taken a step toward the drawing room. Before she knew it, the portières flew apart and an eager little woman had rushed past her and flung her arms about the neck of the man.

Caswell's features were working, as he gently disengaged her arms, still keeping one hand. Half shoving her aside, ignoring Constance, he had faced Drummond. For a moment the brazen detective flinched.

As he did so, deForest Caswell crumpled up the mass of tissue paper reports and flung them into the fireplace.

"Get out!" he said, suppressing his voice with difficulty. "Send me—your bill. I'll pay it—but, mind, if it is one penny more than it should be, I'll—I'll fight if it takes me from the district attorney and the grand jury to the highest court of the State. Now—go!"

Caswell turned slowly again toward his wife.

"I've been a brute," he said simply.

Something almost akin to jealousy rose in Constance's heart as she saw Mildred, safe at last.

Then Caswell turned slowly to her. "You," he said, stroking his wife's hand gently but looking at Constance, "you are a real clairvoyant."

JOSEPH GOLLOMB

A CASE WITHOUT A CLEW

GIVEN a machine that hunts criminals. Set it the task of weaving a rope wherewith to hang a man. But give it not the slightest bit of material wherewith to work, not the slenderest gossamer of a clew, nothing but its vast and complicated self, assisted by squads of mechanical men.

Captain it, however, by a few highly endowed men in charge of the machine, engineers endowed with the deadly machinelike logic of the German mind, and its genius for creation of marvelous machines. Given such a machine and nothing to work with, what could it do? Let us see.

Morenstrasse in Berlin is a residential street of well-to-do apartment homes. One of them, a ponderous seven story affair lorded the block on which it stood with its massive granite front, and housed people who belonged behind such a front—successful merchants, several bank directors, and the like.

The entrance to this house looked like the approach to a combination castle, armory, and safety vault. Two unfriendly looking lions of granite flanked the steps up to the front doors, which were ponderous affairs of carved oak, never by chance negligently open, not even unlocked. To enter the house, if you were a visitor, you had to press a button on the side of the door, a button, by the way, that looked like the knob of a rosette, exactly like the other rosettes that studded the side of the door.

So that if you did not know which of these knobs sounded the bell, you had to go around to the servants' entrance, where, before you were admitted, you had to

(From "Master Man Hunters," by Joseph Gollomb. Copyright, 1926, by The Macaulay Company, New York.)

pass the scrutiny of the janitor's family peering out from behind barred windows. It was not fear of the police, you may be sure, that made the house so cautious in admitting the world.

For its tenants were of the ultrarespectable world, whom the police protect from those who prey on the well-to-do. No, this caution and exclusiveness was the expression of the same fear that makes banks put bars on its windows, guards at its entrances and patent locks on its doors.

Even if you knew which rosette knob pressed the bell you had to wait till a ponderous clicking opened the outer door by invisible hands. Then you stepped into a marble entrance hall and were confronted by a burly man in gray uniform who waited for you to state your errand.

This man, a former regimental blacksmith, or his colleague, who replaced him the other twelve hours of duty, then relayed your errand or name by telephone to the person you came to see. If upstairs sent down word that it was all right to admit you, the former blacksmith escorted you to the glass-walled electric elevator, where the runner of the cage took you up to the floor announced to him by the guard at the door.

Arrived at that floor the elevator runner, following strict instructions, escorted you to the door of your visit and waited till he heard your name taken in to the host of the house and also heard the host consent to receive the caller. Only then did the elevator runner go back to his cage. This was the practice every minute of the twenty-four hours of the day.

Among the tenants in that residential vault was a Dr. Kernstoff, a gem expert for one of the biggest jewelry houses in Germany. He was a bachelor and lived in a seven-room apartment alone. But a valet and a cook came every morning to attend to him and left only late at night when Dr. Kernstoff himself saw them out of the house. Then he would lock the only door to the apartment, shoot home two bolts on the massive oak door, reënforce this with a chain lock, and go to bed.

One morning the servants came as usual at the accus-

tomed hour and rang the bell. There was no answer. The servants rang again and again until there was no doubt that the Herr Doctor was either out or so deep in sleep that even the loud bell they could hear through the oaken door could not wake him. But were he out, both elevator runner and the guard downstairs would have told them so and would have admitted them—for the valet and the cook had reputations for unswerving honesty.

When they had been ringing for a quarter of an hour, the valet went downstairs and called up the apartment on the telephone. That bell rang, as he knew, at the master's bedside and had an insistent ring that would wake any but the dead. But since the Herr Doctor still did not answer, could he be anything but dead?

The servants then telephoned Dr. Kernstoff's place of business. No, he had not arrived, they were informed, and were sternly asked in turn what was keeping the Herr Doctor? The servants, by now thoroughly alarmed, told the senior partner of the jewelry house, who had taken up the receiver, that without doubt something was the matter. Would the Herr Senior Partner kindly advise them what to do?

The Herr Senior Partner not only told them what to do, but did it himself. He called up a friend of his, one of the engineers of the Berlin police machine, and consulted with him.

"The apartment must be entered!" said the police official when he heard the details. "I'll send some of my men to do it."

A skilled mechanic from the police department was sent to open the door without breaking it open, if possible. He managed to unlock everything that skeleton keys could open. But there were the bars and chain locks on the inside to deal with. They were all shot home as usual when the Herr Doctor retired.

There was no other entrance into the apartment—except the windows. But as there was no balcony or fire escapes to the apartment—Berlin apartment houses rarely have them—and as the roof was three stories above the apart-

ment and the street four stories below, the only possible way the Herr Doctor could have left would be to lower himself with a rope or to jump out. So after consultation with his chiefs at police headquarters, the mechanic broke down the oak door to the apartment.

One glance into the living room and pandemonium broke loose. Dr. Kernstoff had been murdered! Clad in his nightgown he lay face down on the rug in the living room, and blood was on the rug where his head rested. He had been killed by a blow on his forehead with some blunt instrument that broke flesh and bone with a single stroke. The weapon that caused the death was gone.

And the one who dealt the blow, how had he entered the apartment? More mysterious still, how did he leave it? For the inside bars and chain locks, when the door was broken down, were found still shot home.

Obviously the murderer could not have left the apartment by the door and then slid the bolts and locks home again on the inside of the door. And the windows were closed, though not locked on the latch. For not even the tenants of that closely guarded house bothered locking windows four stories from the street and three below the roof.

Here, then, was a murder; and there was the machine in *Alexanderplatz* with its vast catalogue of twenty million cards, with its *Meldwesen* and its *Razzia* and its squads of mechanical men ready and eager to begin weaving the rope that would hang the murderer.

The machine demanded, "Under what category number does the mode of entry come?" And the answer was, "We don't know how the entry was made. The bars and locks on the inside of the door were still fastened. The chimney would hardly admit a cat. The windows were not locked, it is true.

"But the dust on their sills had not been disturbed, as we found on examination. One might, of course, have descended from the roof by means of a rope and entered by way of the windows. But the trapdoor leading to the roof is wired for burglar alarms and is still untouched.

"Some one could conceivably have hidden himself in the apartment during the day. But the servants had given the house their bi-weekly thorough cleaning yesterday afternoon late and would have come across any one hiding there. The question remained unanswered, how did the murderer get out?"

"Finger-prints!" clamored the machine. "Not a one," was the report from the experts.

"Then give me the names of all servants, house attendants, intimate friends of the doctor, his business associates, employes at his place of business, the names of every one he visited in the last few days, of every one who had visited him, even that of the policeman on beat. I must have something to start working with!" protested the machine.

So they fed it scores and scores of names. The main part of the machine, the *Meldwesen,* the card catalogue it takes one hundred and eighty rooms to house, ground out a vast deal of information on the scores of names. But when it got through working on the grist, it was found that nothing came of that. Like attracts like and the ultrarespectable Herr Doctor saw no one, had nothing to do with any one on whose record the *Meldwesen* could find the slightest flaw of irrespectability.

"What motive for the murder?" insisted the machine.

"We don't know," replied the experts. "Not a precious stone had been taken from the doctor's safe. Not a pfennig. Not a document touched. For the doctor, a methodical man, had a complete inventory of everything and everything checks up present. He had not an enemy we can learn of.

"In short, we have not a single clew as to the why or the how of the murder, or of the escape. Suicide is out of the question. The rug where the body was found shows that a violent struggle had taken place. The skull was smashed in by a blunt instrument. There has been found no such instrument. *Not a single clew!"*

Here is where merely human brains would have said, "Then there is nothing to be done in the case!"

But the man-hunting machine of the Berlin police said: "Very well, then at least this one thing is clear. *There is not a single clew.* Then we shall start with this clew—that there is none!"

Whereupon the deadly machinelike German logic went to work on the case. "Since there are no clews it means that whoever killed Dr. Kernstoff was skilled in removing or avoiding clews. Only a skilled criminal, familiar with the technique of removing clews, would have made such a clean job of it. But not even such a man acquires this skill all at once.

"Therefore the man must have committed similar crimes before, or parts of such crimes, such as his amazingly mysterious mode of entry and exit. If so, he must be on record somewhere; or if he has been too skillful for the police to get him his crimes were surely reported. Dr. Schneikert, your *Kriminal Archiv* clipping collection had better get to work!"

Dr. Hans Schneikert, one of the world's greatest authorities on handwriting and the man who devised the famous clipping bureau in connection with the *Kriminal Archiv* of the Berlin police, thereupon touched a button and part of the big machine began to work.

Part of the machine is a collection of newspaper clippings from every part of Germany and even from newspapers abroad. In every one of them some crime is reported and described. Every crime and clipping is catalogued and indexed, so that word is all that is needed to set mechanical men searching in that remarkable record. What Dr. Schneikert looked for came under these headings:

Burglaries committed, with doors found locked on inside. Burglaries committed, with no clews left behind. Murders unmotivated. Murders unmotivated, with blunt weapon on head.

—and several other similar subheads.

A diligent search finally narrowed Dr. Schneikert's in-

terest to a clipping from a Darmstadt newspaper telling of a burglary committed in a strongly guarded apartment house. Entry had been made by means of a painter's scaffold, which had been put up that day and had remained overnight on the level of the roof. But the burglars had left no clew otherwise; no finger-prints, no foot-prints, no marks of any kind.

"Nothing, at least, that the police of a small town could discover!" decided the chief of the Berlin detective system. "Therefore, although this was committed three weeks ago, we shall send down *our* men to see if *we* can find any clews."

So a commission of experts went to Darmstadt to look into the three-weeks-old burglary. They found the mystery there was even greater than the Darmstadt police found it. For the Berlin detectives—not the mechanical rank and file detectives, but their expert heads—found that entry was *not* made by means of the painter's ladder primarily.

Whoever could have got access to the roof by *means of the stairs* could just as easily have entered the apartment by a rear balcony. Therefore some one must have got to the roof by some way other than the stairs. But as the roof was isolated from other buildings how *did* the burglars get up to the roof to use the painter's scaffold?

An examination of a chimney at the corner of the house and on the street front showed two of the corners frayed as by a rope. The painters had not used that chimney to anchor their scaffold. The only other way to get up on that roof would be to throw a rope up from the street—a prodigious feat to do with a rope heavy enough to support the weight of a man. But could it not be got up there some other way?

Yes, reasoned the Berlin detectives, if first a stone were tied to a long, light string, then so thrown that it would strike the steeply sloping roof behind the chimney and rolling down on the other side would drop over the edge of the roof and be let down. Then a sufficiently strong

rope could be tied to the string and hauled up to the roof, around the chimney and so down again until some one on the ground held the two ends of a strong rope in his hands. To test their theory the Berlin detectives did just that thing, and one of them climbed by means of the rope up to the house.

It was then found that once on the roof with such a rope as aid, there was no need of the painter's scaffold. Therefore either the theory was wrong and no such rope had been used—or the painter's scaffold was only a blind. Investigation with this point in view showed that the latter theory was correct. The burglar had climbed the side of the house.

Word was flashed back to Berlin to look on the Kernstoff apartment house roof for such signs as might indicate that a similar device had been used there, too. Yes, the word came back, the chimney at one end of the roof bore such marks of rope.

Whereupon the theory was tested in the same way as in Darmstadt. A string was obtained, long enough to reach from the ground, around the chimney, on the roof, and down to the street again. A small stone was tied to one end. It was thrown up to the roof, landed on the sloping roof behind the chimney, rolled down the slope and around the other side of the chimney and so down to the street. Tying a rope to the string it was drawn up, around the chimney and down again. Then a detective climbed up the side of the house by the rope.

Once on the roof, however, it developed that a man would have a hard job to get to Dr. Kernstoff's window unless he could literally walk along the face of the house like a fly. So they went to work to find out how a man, hanging by a rope from the roof could yet "walk" along the face of a house.

They concluded finally that it could be done, if the climber, suspended by a rope, wore some such spur arrangement on his feet as workers on telegraph poles use when they climb wooden poles. On further examination, it was found that in the granite face of the house

were scars such as might have been made by a sharp steel spur.

Dr. Schneikert then went over his collection of newspaper clippings again for burglaries that would indicate such a technique. He found a few worth looking into. From these, there began to emerge the shadowy theoretical figure of a burglar who had devised a technique of his own; who was used to working high in the air; who probably got his idea from some previous occupation.

"Previous occupation involving work in the air, such as that of a house painter, steeple jack, iron worker and the like," were now put into the maw of the big *Meldwesen* machine. Through the *Kriminal Archiv,* too, burrowed many spectacled, mechanical men, searching and searching in the records of a list of burglars for one who, in a more respectable past, had a previous occupation involving work up in the air, *et cetera.*

A dozen such were found, men who had been convicted as burglars and who had been house painters or iron workers. One was found who had been a steeple jack. Then began the process of winnowing the list. Two were dead; three in prison; five were at liberty.

On the five centered the hunt. Two were at once located, one in Hamburg, another in Essen. They were rounded up, examined, and found armed with perfect alibis. Three remained to be hunted down.

On the card of every one in the *Meldwesen* are names of relatives, friends, business associates; on the cards of those convicted of crime are names of accomplices, sweethearts and enemies of the person recorded on the card. Each of these names in turn has a card in the *Meldwesen* with information reaching out in different directions.

The whole catalogue can be likened to a series of webs, like a spider's, with each web a complete pattern of its own, but with each thread leading to another web, until the whole covers a vast area. The only difference between the *Meldwesen* and such a system of spiders' webs is that there is strength in the threads that bind the *Meld-*

wesen scheme—strength enough to make a rope wherewith to hang a man.

The *Meldwesen* was weaving such a strand now with new material that had been given it. It was now piecing together from its card catalogue the record of an individual, which was checking up nicely with the theories of what few findings they had.

"Johann Gutkind," it was saying, "alias Christopher Mannheim, alias several other names; nicknamed by his accomplices the 'Horse Fly'; twenty-nine years old; formerly employed as layer of roof tiles; later worked as steeple jack; served two years for burglary committed in Hamburg; mode of entry through window on third story of apartment house. He knocked householder unconscious when latter pursued him into the street; weapon, blackjack; light sentence, due to youth and first offense; but reported since liberation from prison associating with notorious burglars, namely—" Here followed a list of friends.

Johann Gutkind was nominated by the *Meldwesen* and the Berlin police, therefore, for further investigation. His whereabouts were unknown; for the reprehensible young man had not reported to the police his recent changes of address. He was already subject to arrest and punishment for this omission, irrespective of the Kernstoff murder.

Every name on Johann's card was taken out for further study and the individuals themselves placed under surveillance. A great deal of this work came to nothing. But on Gutkind's card appeared the name of a suspected receiver of stolen goods. This fence had an eighteen-year-old son, Fritz, whose name also appeared on the cards of several of Gutkind's associates.

On Fritz's own *Meldwesen* card it appeared that the worst thing in the youth's record was that he had been used as a sort of innocent errand boy in several burglaries and in the consequent disposition of stolen goods.

It was brought out in each case that the boy, while he may have had a suspicion of the character of some of the men for whom he performed services, he was really

ignorant of the exact nature of each errand, and was therefore not liable to punishment as an accomplice. It would appear that the criminals employing him deliberately kept him from actual participation in crime so that he could continue to remain at large and be of service to them.

In investigating this youth it was found that at the time of the Kernstoff murder, he was employed by a large grocer as delivery boy. He had at his disposal a closed wagonette, propelled by himself seated on a tricycle arrangement on which the wagonette was mounted.

In following up the theory of a human fly climbing up the side of the Kernstoff house, the detective came up against this difficulty. A man cannot easily promenade about a city in the small hours of the night with coils of stout rope, without being seen by a policeman and hustled off to the station for examination.

And the policeman on the Kernstoff beat on the night of the murder was a man with a record for keeping his eyes open. He had seen no one carrying coils of rope that night. If he had, he would have stopped him.

But now the wagonette on the tricycle furnished the police machine a new line of inquiry. The policeman on the Kernstoff beat was asked if he had seen such a wagonette. The policeman racked his memory and consulted his memorandum book in which Berlin policemen, according to strict regulations, keep a detailed account of everything on their beat that departs in the least from routine occurrence.

Suddenly memory furnished what had been too insignificant for the policeman to enter in his memorandum. At about three o'clock of the morning of the murder, a tricycle wagonette, propelled by a young fellow, went through that street. The policeman, under general instructions, stopped him and made him identify himself.

The youth produced identification papers in good order and proved that he was a grocer's clerk. He also told the policeman that a cousin of his had a christening that night; and the grocer's clerk had arranged with his em-

ployer to be allowed to use the tricycle wagonette wherein to deliver the extra table linens, dishes, and cutlery that had been hired for the occasion.

The youth had stayed till the party broke up, he said, and was now taking these things back to his home to save himself an extra trip next day. From his home he would return the things in the morning to the place whence they had been rented.

The policeman threw open the lid of the wagonette and found a lot of tumbled table linen on top. He did not dig deeper into the contents, but from a police box telephoned the grocer for whom the youth worked. From him he got confirmation of the boy's story. So the policeman let him go with his wagonette.

The detective machine did not quiz the youth. The possibilities were that he would betray more if he did not know he was being watched. He was discharging his duties as errand boy to the grocer apparently in good faith. But he was living with a degree of comfort rather beyond an errand boy's wages. Every step the boy made was followed.

It was thus found that he frequented a small *wein stube* or a kind of saloon near the police headquarters in *Alexanderplatz*. It had small windows giving on the street and looked not in the least attractive, though, neither did it look forbidding.

Its frequenters were studied and it was found that several pickpockets and strong-arm holdup men came there occasionally. The youth would come there, drink a glass of Rhine wine, chat with one or two men quietly, go into a back room for what looked like a conference with somebody; then come out and go home.

When this had been going on for some time, the detectives sent a stool pigeon, a trusted sneak of the underworld, to pretend drunkenness and blunder into that back room a few moments immediately after the youth had entered it one evening. As the supposed drunk put his hand on the knob, the owner of the wine house called out:

"Where in hell are you going?"

But the man had already opened the door. To his astonishment he found the room empty. And there was no other door or window there to tell whither the youth had vanished. By then the proprietor had seized the man by the collar and hurled him back.

"You keep out of this place unless you want your neck broken!" he said furiously.

Half an hour later the youth came out again and went home.

That night several of the mechanical men of the Berlin police machine jimmied their way into the *wein stube* and noiselessly explored the room where the youth had vanished so mysteriously. As the stool pigeon had reported, there was but one door to the room, the one by which the mechanical men now stole in; and no other outlet, not even a window. With pocket flashes lighting their silent search, the detectives explored every inch of the room.

An hour spent thus brought no results. There was but one way left to conduct such a search—to tap and knock at every bit of floor and wall, which would of course alarm every one in the house. But there was no alternative.

One of the mechanical men went outside again and summoned the reserves waiting for word from them. A dozen detectives headed by a superior officer tramped into the *wein stube,* shouted for the landlord to appear and proceeded to explore the mysterious room, with all the noise in the world.

Pounding on the floor soon yielded for the detectives a hollow sound in the neighborhood of a chest of drawers standing on a bit of carpet. This was moved aside and a trapdoor discovered.

"Who's down there?" demanded the head of the police squad, of the landlord.

The man refused to speak. The trapdoor was raised by one of the mechanical men, while the others stood with revolvers cocked. No sound came from the dark cave. A

ladder must have been the means of descending to it, for there were no stairs; nor was there any ladder visible.

Meanwhile the young grocer's clerk was brought to the scene.

"Who is down there?" he was asked.

He was beside himself with fear. "He will kill me if I tell. Or any of his friends will do it, if he doesn't! I'll go to jail first!"

He refused to say another word. The police finally decided there was nothing left but a frontal attack. A ladder was brought. The officer in charge of the attack shouted an order for his men to descend. He himself led them.

From below there came no sound. But suddenly the leader of the attacking party, a veteran of the great war, yelled to his men:

"Back! Upstairs!"

His men scrambled for the ladder, even before he had shouted. They were yelling, gasping, retching. Out of the well of darkness they tumbled one by one, contorted and choking. Those waiting outside were astounded.

"Gas! Chlorine!" the leader of the party gasped.

Then those who had been through the war fled outdoors. For the familiar, dreaded fumes of chlorine came out of the pit.

In the street was enacted a scene like a tiny corner of a battlefield in the early part of the great war. Several men were writhing with deadly nausea. Others were trying to administer first aid.

Meanwhile from a patrol box telephone went calls. They brought ambulances and a motor police patrol. From it poured another two squads of mechanical men. But these had gas masks with them. And from the patrol wagon they brought pickaxes and hatchets.

Donning masks, one squad began chopping open the floor above the hiding place. The other squad, also protected with masks, stood ready to shoot.

When half the floor was torn up, powerful electric torches were lowered to the cellar. When this brought no volley of revolver fire, at a motioned signal from the

leader of the attacking party, six men, wearing gas masks, leaped down into the cellar ready for the fight of their lives.

But all that met their sight was a huddled figure on the floor, writhing in agony with a gas mask over his head. The man was seized and rushed through the opening in the floor.

In the fresh air, the mask was taken off the man's head. It was Johann Gutkind, the man the police were hunting in connection with the Kernstoff murder. He had prepared the gas defense; and a defect in the mask he depended upon betrayed him to death. For he died shortly after.

Before his death he confessed that he had used the grocer's clerk as a partly innocent accomplice in an attempt to rob Dr. Kernstoff. The wagonette held a long rope concealed under the soiled linen the policeman saw in his careless inspection. Gutkind's method of entry was exactly what the police had deduced it was—by means of rope and a pair of steel spurs.

He opened Dr. Kernstoff's window and stepped across the sill without touching it, so as not to disturb the dust he knew theoretically was there. He was gloved, so he left no finger-prints.

He had barely entered the living room, however, when Dr. Kernstoff leaped upon him. In the struggle Gutkind crashed in the man's skull with his blackjack. But he was so frightened at having killed a man—his first and only murder—that he decided to take no loot with him that might furnish the police with the remotest clew. But in the crime museum in the great police headquarters on *Alexanderplatz* I saw the rope and spurs he had used—mute trophies of the battle between an original criminal and a German built impersonal, criminal-hunting machine.

JOSEPH GOLLOMB

TOO MANY CLEWS

In my last chapter on the man-hunting police machine of Berlin I told how that machine behaved in a case that furnished it at first with not a wisp of clew wherewith to work. Working in the air, figuratively and literally, the machine actually found grist in the fact that it had not a clew to work with.

A companion piece to that article must be this story of a case wherein the same machine had trouble because it had too many clews, an embarrassment of riches that threatened to clog its wheels.

It began quite simply—too simply—with a burglary in the Charlottenburg section of Berlin. The home of a Bourse broker was broken into and robbed of a considerable amount of silver and jewelry. The burglar or burglars left no trace of themselves, none, that is, that was discovered by the squad of mechanical men sent there, the rank and file of the detective service, mere cogs out of whom every bit of individuality and initiative has been drilled.

Their squad leader reported this over the telephone. Whereupon a "commission on larcenies in flats and tenements"—a group of headquarters experts specializing narrowly in such burglaries as the one in question—came to make its own examination.

They found that entry had been made by jimmying the cellar door to a built-in stairway used as a fire-escape; then by expert lockpicking of the door to the apartment. The job was done between three o'clock in the morning and dawn. It was a professional affair, as proved by the fact that no fingerprints were found.

(From "Master Man Hunters," by Joseph Gollomb. Copyright, 1928, by The Macaulay Company, New York.)

Then the burglar or burglars repaired to the kitchen and leisurely made a lunch and ate it. The commission studied their menu more than anything else that had to do with the robbery, it seemed to the astonished host.

But the commission, investigating the case with a procedure so completely predetermined that it amounted to machine work, knew what it was doing. The victim of the robbery stared in wonder while the experts triumphantly set down such momentous discoveries as that six eggs, seven slices of bacon, and a whole jar of marmalade had been consumed by the midnight visitor or visitors.

It was a question, from the amount of food consumed, whether there were two men eating with moderate appetites, or one man with a ravenous hunger. From the disposition of the crumbs of the feast, however, the commission decided that but one man had eaten, one man with a remarkable appetite. Which in turn pointed to a one-man job.

Back to police headquarters came the commission and fed its findings into the machine that hunts criminals in Berlin. The chief part of that machine, as I pointed out before, is that huge catalogue of twenty-million cards called the *Meldwesen,* an alphabetical record which it takes one hundred and sixty rooms to house, the most exhaustive body of information about human beings ever assembled. Most of it is information on respectable citizens, foreigners and transients in Berlin.

But part of it is the *Kriminal Archiv,* where, in addition to the regular *Meldwesen* card, there is a rich addition of data on every criminal who was convicted in Berlin, or who ever operated in Berlin even if convicted elsewhere.

The commission had entered its findings of the burglary in question on a card. Then it put that card into the *Meldwesen* machine to make it produce a solution, somewhat as one drops a penny into a slot machine.

What happened really was that the card was given to

a spectacled mechanical man, one of the three hundred and sixty who operate the *Meldwesen* machine, and he hunted for information that would correspond to that on the card. But the man and his search were so mechanical in their nature that it was really the working of a machine.

It will help understanding the present case if I give a sketch of the kind of card continental police keep in their criminal records. Here, for instance, is one formula of ten headings under which a crime is recorded by the police:

1—*Classword;* kind of property attacked, whether dwelling house, lodging house, hotel, etc.

2—*Entry;* the actual point of entry, whether front window, back window, etc.

3—*Means;* whether with implements or tools, such as a ladder, jimmy, etc.

4—*Object;* kind of property taken.

5—*Time;* not only time of day or night, but whether church time, market day, during meal hours, etc.

6—*Style;* whether the criminal, to obtain entrance, described himself as mechanic, canvasser, agent, etc.

7—*Tale;* any disclosure or story as to his alleged business or errand which the criminal may make.

8—*Pals;* whether crime was committed with confederates.

9—*Transport;* whether bicycle or other vehicle was used in connection with the crime.

10—*Trademark;* whether criminal committed any unusual act in connection with the crime, such as poisoning a dog, changing his clothes, eating a meal in the house robbed, leaving a note for the owner, etc. Within a quarter of an hour after the mechanical man, so to say, dropped the card with the findings of the commission into the *Meldwesen,* it produced a name, a man whose previous burglary, as described in the *Meldwesen* and *Kriminal Archiv,* resembled so closely the burglary in question that a squad of mechanical men was sent out to bring the man in—for the *Kriminal Archiv* even keeps close track

of the movements and hanging-out places of criminals who are out of prison.

This man's card showed that in a previous burglary he also had jimmied the cellar door of a built-in fire escape stairway in an apartment house; picked the lock leading to the apartment, had taken silverware and jewelry; had made an enormous meal in the kitchen of the apartment, and betrayed an inordinate appetite for bacon and eggs and marmalade for dessert.

There were other cards that showed elements of similarity with the present burglary—but none that showed such exact correspondence.

The man was brought in and closely questioned as to his movements on the night of the burglary—for, of course, he strenuously denied that it was he who had done this particular job. But when it came to furnishing the alibi, his protestations of innocence were little helped. For the story he told seemed weak.

He said that on that particular night he had scraped up an acquaintance with a stranger in a tavern; they had drunk a lot; and what he next remembered was waking up in his room with a splitting headache next morning. But the *Kriminal Archiv* card pointed so unmistakably to him and his alibi was so little convincing that the police felt little hesitation in holding him.

The following week another burglary occurred in a well-to-do part of Berlin. This time it was a jewelry store that was robbed. It was the "Commission on thefts from jewelry stores and pawnshops" that investigated the case and reported on a card the technique of that particular "job." The card, as in the other case, was put into the *Meldwesen,* and as before, it found in a short time a suspect whose record in the *Kriminal Archiv* so closely corresponded to the details of this burglary that he was haled to police headquarters and without much ado held for trial.

For his attempt at an alibi for the night of the burglary was so feeble—although he protested as heatedly as the other burglar that he was innocent—that he was laughed

at for his story. He had been to visit some cronies, he recounted, and was on his way home toward midnight when in a lonely quarter, just after he had turned a corner, he had been slugged from behind with a blackjack. When he recovered it was still dark. But it took him so long to get out of the cellar where he found himself that dawn was in the sky when he got home.

His cronies, of course, corroborated his statement, and he offered to show the very celler where he found himself on recovering consciousness. But neither offer of proof was taken seriously enough by the police to free him from being held for trial.

But one of the commission remarked how similar to the alibi furnished by the burglar in the first case I recorded here was the alibi of the suspect in the second case. The member of the commission remarked this idly as a sort of interesting coincidence. Then he forgot the matter—until it came back to him with added force two weeks later.

For a veritable epidemic of burglaries seemed to have broken out in Berlin, and there were features in the third case I record here that made the member of the commission, who remarked on the coincidence I noted above, think hard.

Here was a successful burglary in the home of an antique collector; with well defined "trade marks" of the burglar who did the job. And in this case the description tallied closely with another description found in the *Kriminal Archiv* section of the *Meldwesen.*

This man with whose record the latest burglary corresponded so closely was brought to the police chiefs and questioned as to the night of the burglary. He grew confused, then clearly evasive.

Finally he broke down and confessed that he had been planning to give a party to his friends, but had run short of funds. On the night in question he had broken into a delicatessen store and taken a quantity of food and sweets for his party. It was petty larceny to which he confessed.

and the police saw in this an attempt on his part to escape punishment for the more serious burglary.

His alibi was of course investigated and was borne out to the extent that the delicatessen store he indicated had really been broken into on the night in question. But the police held that the suspect may have heard of the lesser burglary and remembered it to use it as an alibi.

The suspect continued, however, to protest his innocence, and racked his brains how to convince the police that he was telling the truth. Suddenly he remembered something.

"You say it was not I who broke into the delicatessen store on the night of the fifteenth. Well, here is proof. I was climbing up on a barrel to reach some of the imported caviar on an upper shelf in the store room when a nail I did not see tore my trouser leg and gashed my shin. Here is the mark on my leg still. And there is the rip on my trouser leg. Let me go with you and I will show you the nail."

That sounded real, and the police, looking for that nail, found it just as described by the suspect. That was not enough for them. They took the nail, the point of which was covered with brown rust, to the chemical laboratory of the Berlin police. Here the rust was scraped off. A dilute solution was made of it, and this was analyzed.

It was found to be rust caused by blood. A drop of blood was then taken from the wrist of the suspect. A system of reagents and a count of blood corpuscles was then used on the test of both the blood solution taken from the nail and of the suspect's blood. They indicated the same blood.

The police were puzzled. The "trade marks" of the burglary at the antiquary's tallied so perfectly with the suspect's record in the *Kriminal Archiv* that mere coincidence seemed too simple an explanation. Also as such a coincidence would weaken the prestige of the *Meldwesen,* the police looked for some other theory.

"Not only is there the 'coincidence' of the exact duplication of technique in the burglary 'trade mark,' but there

is also the coincidence that the suspect in the case established his alibi only by the narrowest of margins. No, let us see if there isn't some other explanation."

Deadly German machine-like logic began to weave theories.

"The 'trade marks' are exactly alike. Therefore, either the same man was at the bottom of it, or some pupil or confederate of his. Or—some one imitated that 'trade mark.' But the suspect had practically proved his alibi. And we know from his record that he has never had an accomplice or partner in crime, always played a lone hand. Therefore some one has imitated his 'trade mark.' If so, why?"

"To cast suspicion on the suspect," was the tentative conclusion. The suspect was then asked, had he any enemies? No, he replied; and the fact that it would have served him better to say yes helped belief.

"Then," decided German police logic, "it was done by some one who knew of his technique and, though not an enemy, imitated it to throw suspicion off himself and on to this man. But the 'trade mark' tallies so closely with our record of it that *it must have been studied either at the scene of the burglaries or in our own files.*"

The first seemed improbable. But to assume the latter was uncomfortable. That would mean that some one on the inside at police headquarters who had access to the *Kriminal Archiv* may have studied the record of the suspect and given it to some one else to imitate and thereby throw the police off the scent. In American terminology of the underworld, somebody may have "planted" the suspect.

That would be so novel and effective a device that one could expect its use again. Perhaps it had even already been used. In examining this possibility the police reexamined the cases of the suspects in the two preceding burglaries. The one accused of burglary of the Bourse broker's house still protested in his protestations that he was "dead drunk" on the night in question. The other, accused of burglary of the jewelry store, clung just as

strenuously to his story that he had been blackjacked on the night of that burglary.

For the first time the police became eager to believe these two men. For if their stories were true, it meant that the newest theory of the police was likely to be a fact.

For now a theoretical but highly interesting figure began to emerge in the minds of the chiefs of the Berlin police. It was that of a sort of super-burglar who studied the technique of other, lesser, burglars, who then proceeded to imitate their technique and did it so well that it fooled the experts, readers, so to speak, of the handwriting of burglars' work.

At the same time confederates of the super-burglar would have arranged matters so with the burglar to be "planted" that he would have a difficult time establishing an alibi for himself on the night his technique was imitated in a real burglary.

Such a super-burglar would have his accomplice on the inside at police headquarters to acquaint him with the "trade marks" to be imitated. This conclusion was reached in the secrecy of the council room of the detective chiefs. Then followed a secret and minute search in the *Meldwesen* of the records of the several hundred men and women who were themselves employed in handling the huge card catalogue.

But these had been chosen with especial care and the secret investigation bore out the records of scrupulous honesty of all the clerks and office staff.

However—so minute was the search—it was found that on several occasions when one of the scrub women employed in the *Meldwesen* offices was ill her place had been taken by a daughter of hers. On the record card of the daughter it was found that she had been among those taken to police headquarters in a *Razzia,* or police raid, for the purpose of examination of identity papers.

She had been taken to police headquarters not because of anything against her, but because of the company she

kept. For there were a number of men and women at that dance who were recorded in the *Kriminal Archiv*. When, however, a young man of respectable reputation as a delicatessen store clerk came forward as her escort to the dance, she was allowed to go free.

But now interest on the part of the police centered on her once more. Unknown to her a minute investigation into her life was made, and her movements were followed. She was a young woman in her late twenties, not good looking, but greedy for pleasure. Although her old mother worked for a living scrubbing floors in the *Meldwesen* office, this robust young woman did no work of any sort. Yet she did not seem to lack the means wherewith to dress and eat well.

It was then found that the young clerk who had acted as her escort to the dance where the *Razzia* had taken place, was a sad suitor of hers. She cared more for the company of other young men and some not so young, but much more able to spend money on her. Assiduous shadowing of the young woman, Anna Kurtz, discovered to the police one suitor or favorite of Anna's, who took her out often to cafés and theaters.

This man was traced and identified as Henkel, a former clerk or a professional bondsman, who specialized in furnishing bail to those arrested on criminal charges. Henkel did not seem to have any means of support more visible than Anna's. But he did not lack the means wherewith to give both himself and her many treats at expensive restaurants.

Meanwhile word came to the overseer of the *Meldwesen* menial workers that Anna's mother was ill again and that her daughter, Anna, would, as usual, take her place that night after office hours. This information was passed on to the members of the "commission" at work on the series to burglaries imitated by the "Mocking Bird," that the police chiefs now spoke of the theoretical figure they had built up.

The full *Meldwesen* staff works only during the day. At six o'clock the day clerks go home and a small staff or

night shift takes their places. At this time too come the scrub women and office cleaners.

That evening Anna Kurtz came in her mother's place, and with mop and scrubbing pail went leisurely to work. Ordinarily there were clerks about in the *Kriminal Archiv* offices. But this evening they seemed to be in a truant mood, and were gathered in the main office, having a good time apparently.

Anna found herself alone in the office of the *Kriminal Archiv*. But she did not seem to mind it. She even glanced occasionally into the corridor as if to assure herself that no one would interrupt her at her work. Several times she seemed to hear some one coming. At such moments she would quickly resume her position on the floor by the side of her scrubbing.

But at about eleven in the evening she rose suddenly and went to one of the cabinets of the *Archiv*. Taking out a key and a slip of paper from the bosom of her dress, she unlocked one of the drawers and glancing at a name written on the paper, she searched and quickly found a certain card in the cabinet. For some minutes she copied on a slip of paper what she read on that card.

Then she put the card back in its place, closed the cabinet and locked it, thrust the key and the slip of paper back in her bosom, and resumed her work. By midnight she was through and left, convinced that no one had by any chance seen her interesting interlude.

She did not go home to her mother, but took a taxi to a quiet restaurant near *Wurtemburgerplatz*. Here she was met by Henkel, her most assiduous cavalier. She found occasion when she thought nobody was looking to slip into his hand a bit of paper. Soon after that he put her into a taxi, and himself got into another.

He left it several blocks from his destination. He had alighted in a sparsely settled semi-suburban section of Berlin and the night was far advanced. The man saw not a soul. Nevertheless he kept a sharp lookout and as he turned the corner he whisked about sharply as though to catch some one spying on him.

But he seemed satisfied that his suspicions had no ground, and when he turned into a bleak little garden near the railroad track he looked no more behind him. At the door of the house at the far end of the garden, however, he did take the precaution of giving a low cough, plainly a signal.

But when a moment later the front door opened and a man let him in, without showing any light, the visitor dismissed from his mind any thought that he might have been followed in spite of his precautions.

Deep into the night the two men sat consulting over the slip of paper Anna Kurtz had handed Henkel, planning. Then at dawn both men turned in and slept.

Several nights later a furtive little man entered a *Nachtlokal,* or night club where the police were little welcome. In fact, one had to be well known by the proprietor to get past the several locked doors that led into the resort.

The furtive little man was known to the proprietor as an expert on locks of all kinds, especially such as money changers put on their doors and strong boxes. He had only the month before left a prolonged stay with the State, a stay much against his will, for exercising his skill on a money changer's strong box several years before. The little man's current name was Schmidt.

Schmidt was a bit nervous because some of his friends told him that some one had been inquiring as to his whereabouts in the last few days. Now Schmidt had departed from the custody of the State with the State's full knowledge and consent, his term being up. But it made him nervous anyway, to hear that some one was asking about him.

So he felt the need of relaxation. This *lokal,* as he knew, was safe from the police, and he looked there for a breath of respite.

He breathed more freely when the many doors he had negotiated were closed and locked behind him, and he found himself in a room as yet sparsely filled with quietly talking and drinking men and women, some of whom he knew slightly. He was a recluse of a man, so he called

for a pack of cards and ordering a stein of Kulmbacher beer, arranged the candles on his table and began a game of solitaire.

"Hello, Wehncke!" some one said.

The little man swept the cards to the floor and leaped to his feet, his hand darting to an inside coat pocket. A quiet looking stranger was regarding him friendly.

"My name isn't Wehncke!" the little man snarled, while the rest of the room looked on uneasily at the scene.

The other smiled. "Then I must have made a mistake in the name," he said genially. "But my friends Red Schultze, Hanna, the Gabbler, Chris Fulda, Peter Schnabel, and others told me to look up Carl Wehncke when I got out and he'd shake hands with me. I got out last week and been looking for you since. How are you? My name is Pfeffer."

The little man stared suspiciously at the cordial stranger. But the fact that he had been admitted here and that he had named so many close pals of his quieted his fears for the moment. He did not however take him to his bosom and trust him merely because he had named good names.

The stranger treated to drinks, chatted of harmless subjects, urged Wehncke to go on with his game of solitaire, contenting himself with looking on.

Finally, however, he suggested a two handed game of casino for small stakes. Wehncke was in the mood now for quiet recreation and consented. They played for half an hour when the proprietor of the *lokal* began closing up.

"I can't go to sleep yet," the stranger said to Wehncke. "I suggest we go to my hotel and play some more in my room. I've got some good Moselle and Tokay there and good pipe tobacco from England. What do you say?"

Wehncke was winning. The stranger seemed bent on nothing but recreation. Wehncke was fond of good wine, especially Moselle and Tokay. Indeed, it seemed providential that the stranger should name just the two wines and the tobacco Wehncke loved best. So he consented and the two took a belated taxi and rode to "Pfeffer's" hotel,

where they spent the rest of the night playing cards, smoking English pipe tobacco, and sipping Moselle and Tokay.

When morning came Wehncke had won an agreeable amount of pocket money—though nothing extraordinary—had enjoyed the playing, the wine, and the tobacco, and left the hotel to go to his room. There he fell asleep comfortably.

But at the time he was playing cards in "Pfeffer's" room a scene was taking place in another part of Berlin which would have interested him tremendously.

On *Friedrichstrasse* is a money changer who does a thriving business in foreign currencies, particularly English pounds sterling and American dollars. The day before he had done a rushing business up to past closing time and his vault was full of English pounds and American dollars. The money changer closed the safe, saw to it that the burglar alarm was working, himself locked the doors after the employees had left, then went home.

His office was on the ground floor. Underneath the office the basement was occupied partly as a storeroom, partly as an engine room. Toward three in the morning, at just about the time Wehncke left the *lokal* to play cards in "Pfeffer's" room, two men climbed out of a coal bin in the engine part of the basement.

They then took out of their hiding place three large satchels, two of them empty. From the third they got out a collection of tools, oddly fashioned for work no honest workingman would have recognized.

A cold chisel, for instance, had its head well padded with leather; so had the nose of a short but heavy hammer. One of the two men marked with chalk a circle in the wooden ceiling of the basement. Then the other put the sharp end of the chisel at one point in the circle of chalk and hit the padded end with the padded nose of the hammer. The sound of the blow did not reach further than a few feet.

But in the strong wood of the ceiling a circle began to eat its way upward under the assault of chisel and hammer.

After half an hour the circle was a hole. It cleverly just missed the iron beams in the floor. Yet the man would have given an onlooker a peculiar impression of working not according to his own knowledge, but after a pattern set for him by some one absent.

The wood of the floor of the money changer's office proved an easy task for the chisel and hammer, and in a few minutes both men were in the office.

One of them crawled on the floor toward the window and street door and with a tiny pocket torch searched the woodwork until he found the wires of the burglar alarm. With a short, powerful pair of telegrapher's shears he cut the wires.

Meanwhile the other opened the tool satchel and was kneeling before the money changer's sheet-iron safe. It was not a very formidable affair, but fairly typical of the safes used by money changers who, not handling nearly so much money as a bank, did not extend themselves in the matter of invincible safes.

The burglar put together several pieces of steel into what American safe crackers call a "can opener" and looks like a giant model of one. With this as a starter, he went on rapidly and skillfully to pry open the safe door.

But he too would have given an onlooker the feeling that he was working after a pattern not his own. That was all the more clear because of a peculiar little incident in his work. The door had given way apparently before he quite expected it. Nevertheless, he went on to chisel another scar or two in the lintel of the safe, even after the door had yielded, as though there were a definite touch he wanted to impress on his work.

In the safe were bundles of dollars and English pounds sterling, as well as other foreign currency. There was also German money there, but the man left this severely alone, especially as he saw on a bit of paper in the same drawer a carbon copy of a list of the serial numbers of the German money bills. The foreign currency was stuffed into the two valises.

The other man meanwhile had manipulated the front door of the office so that it appeared as though the lock had been forced open from the inside. But that done he and his confederate climbed down again through the hole in the floor they had cut, and came out of the basement into the rear courtyard. Here they climbed a tall fence, one holding the satchels while the other climbed, and issued on the street.

A taxicab had been slowly going around the block. But at the sound of a long drawn out *meow,* as by a late prowling tomcat, the taxi put on speed and came up to the doorway just as the two men stepped out of a house and into the cab.

One of the men kept looking out of the small oval glass in back of the taxi to see if they were being followed. The other kept a sharp lookout ahead. But they seemed reassured after they had ridden several blocks from the scene of their exploit.

They got out at the gate to the garden where Henkel had entered several nights before and one of the men let himself and his comrade in with a key.

One of the men disposed of the satchels and their contents in cupboards and hidden cubicles in the floor and walls. The other sat down to a telephone and called up "Pfeffer's" hotel. A sleepy night clerk answered.

"I must speak to Herr Pfeffer," the man at the telephone said to him. "I just came into Berlin and have some news of his family he will want to hear at once."

The clerk plugged the call to Pfeffer's room. Pfeffer answered in remarkably short time, as if he had been expecting the call.

"Well, she's safe!" the man at the telephone said. "How's your friend?"

"Played cards most of the night with me—as agreed. Only we two. Perfectly all right. I'm going over."

"Don't come before nine. Want some sleep. And when you do come just use the key. Don't wake me. Good-by."

Pfeffer replaced the receiver and went back quietly to sleep. The men at the other end of the wire did the same.

It would have spoiled their sleep, however, could they have seen several men hidden in a room in the next cottage. One of them had uncovered the insulation of a telephone wire and with a portable apparatus was listening in on the telephone conversation "Pfeffer" had just had. When the receiver had been hung up he looked up at his comrades and reported word for word what had been said.

"Then we can be absolutely sure we are right!" a portly man, evidently in command of the group, said. "In that case there is no further need for delay! Come!"

The squad of men responded as mechanically and promptly as to a military order. Taking out revolvers they shoved up the sleeves of their ulsters, and leaving the house, tramped across to the next house.

Here the leader took out his revolver and pounding on the front door of the house, called out:

"Open in the name of the law!"

At first there was silence in the house. Then a man's voice called out:

"What in God's name do you want?"

The leader of the party called up:

"Useless to play this masquerade any more. We've been on your trail every moment of the time since Anna Kurtz stole the card of Hannus Wehncke from the *Kriminal Archiv!* We've followed your 'Henkel' here. We overheard your plan to imitate Wehncke's technique in robbing the money changer on *Friedrichstrasse*. We saw Henkel lure Wehncke to play cards with him so that he could not supply an alibi.

"We've tapped your telephone wire, and we were within a few feet of you when you cut through the floor and robbed the safe this night. Now we'll blow your brains out if you attempt to fight! Open up!"

There was fierce whispered debate inside the door. A head peered cautiously through the front window. What met that person's sight was a squad of a dozen men at the front door, all with something obviously up their sleeves. At the curb in front of the garden stood a closed

motor police patrol wagon. The man darted to the back window. There another squad of ulstered men stood waiting.

Five minutes later a voice, hoarse with emotion and calamity, called down:

"We surrender!"

Half an hour later a band of what can only be described as "forgers of burglars' trade marks," were in the cells made vacant by three hitherto unhappy suspects, now released almost with apologies.

BEN RAY REDMAN

THE PERFECT CRIME

THE world's greatest detective complacently sipped a port which had never been labelled anything it was not and intently gazed across the table at his most intimate acquaintance; for many years the detective had not permitted himself the luxury of friends. Gregory Hare looked back at him, waiting, listening.

"There is no doubt about it," Trevor reiterated, putting down his glass, "the perfect crime is a possibility; it requires only the perfect criminal."

"Naturally," assented Hare with a shrug, "but the perfect criminal . . ."

"You mean he is a mythical fellow, not apt to be met with in the flesh?"

"Exactly," said Hare, nodding his big head.

Trevor sighed, sipped again, and adjusted the eyeglasses on his thin, sharp nose. "No, I admit I haven't encountered him as yet, but I am always hopeful."

"Hoping to be done in the eye, eh?"

"No, hoping to see the perfect methods of detection tested to the limits of their possibilities. You know, a gifted detector of crime is something more than an inspired policeman with a little bloodhound blood in his veins, something more than a precise scientist; he's an art critic as well, and no art critic likes to be condemned to a steady diet of second-rate stuff."

"Quite."

"Second-rate stuff is bad enough, but it's not the worst. Think of the third, fourth, fifth, and heaven-knows-what-rate crimes that come along every day! And even the masterpieces, the 'classics,' are pretty poor daubs when

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you look at them closely: a bad tone here and a wrong line there; something false, something botched."

"Most murderers are rather foolish," interjected Hare.

"Foolish! Of course they are. You should know, man, you've defended enough of them. The trouble is that murder almost never evokes the best efforts of the best minds. As a rule it is the work of an inferior mind, cunningly striving towards a perfection that is beyond its reach, or of a superior mind so blinded by passion that its faculties are temporarily impaired. Of course, there are your homicidal maniacs, and they are often clever, but they lack imagination and variety; sooner or later their inability to do anything but repeat themselves brings them up with a sharp jerk."

"Repetition is dullness," murmured Hare, "and dullness, as somebody has remarked, is the one unforgivable sin."

"Right," agreed Trevor. "It is, and plenty of murderers have suffered for it. But they have suffered from vanity almost as often. Practically every murderer, unless he has been accidentally impelled to crime, is an egregious egotist. You know that as well as I do. His sense of power is tremendous, and as a rule he can't keep his mouth shut."

Dr. Harrison Trevor's glasses shone brightly, and he plucked continually at the black cord depending from them as he jerked out his sentences with rapidity and precision. He was on his own ground, and he knew what he was talking about. For twenty years criminals had been his specialty and his legitimate prey. He had hunted them through all lands, and he hunted them successfully. Upstairs, in a chiffonier drawer in his bedroom, there was a large red-leather box holding visible symbols of that success: small decorations of gold and silver, and bright ribbons bore mute witness to the gratitude that various European governments had felt, on notable occasions, towards the greatest man-hunter of his generation. If Trevor was a dogmatist on murder he was entitled to be one.

Hare, on the other hand, was a good and respectful

listener, but, being a criminal lawyer of long experience, he was a man with ideas of his own; and he always expressed them when there was no legal advantage to be gained by withholding them. He expressed one now, when he drawled softly, "All murderers are great egotists, are they? How about great detectives?"

Trevor blinked, then smiled coldly, clutching at his black cord. "Most detectives are asses, I grant you, complete asses and vain as peacocks; very few of them are great. I know only three. One of them is now in Vienna, the second is in Paris, and the third is . . ."

Hare raised his hand in interruption and said, "The third, or rather the first, is in this room."

The greatest detective in the world nodded briskly. "Of course. There's no point in false modesty, is there?"

"None at all. And it might be a little difficult to maintain such an attitude so soon after the Harrington case. The poor chap was put out of his misery week before last, wasn't he?"

Trevor snorted. "Yes, if you want to call him a poor chap; he was a deliberate murderer. But let's get back to that perfect crime of ours."

"Of yours, you mean," Hare corrected him politely. "I haven't subscribed to the possibility of it as yet. And how would you know about a perfect crime if it ever were committed? The criminal would never be discovered."

"If he had any artistic pride, he would leave a full account of it to be published after his death. Besides, you are forgetting the perfect methods of detection."

Hare whistled softly. "There's a pretty theoretical problem for you. What would happen when the perfect detector set out to catch the perfect criminal? Rather like the immovable object and the irresistible force business, and just about as sensible. The fly in the ointment, of course, is that there is no such thing as perfection."

Dr. Trevor sat up rigidly and glared at the speaker. "There is perfection in the detection of crime."

"Well, perhaps there is." Hare laughed amiably. "You should know, Trevor. But I think what you really mean

is that there is a perfect method for detecting imperfect crimes."

The doctor's rigidity had vanished, and now he was smiling with as much geniality as he ever displayed. "Perhaps that is what I do mean, perhaps it is. But there is a little experiment that I should like to try, just the same."

"And that is?"

"And that is, or rather would be, the experiment of exercising all my intelligence in the commission of a crime, then, forgetting every detail of it utterly, using my skill and knowledge to solve the riddle of my own creation. Should I catch myself, or should I escape myself? That's the question."

"It would be a nice sporting event," agreed Hare, "but I'm afraid it's one that can't be pulled off. The little trifle of forgetting is the difficulty. But it would be interesting to see the outcome."

"Yes, it would," said the other, speaking rather more dreamily than was his habit, "but we can never see quite as far as we should like to. My Japanese man, Tanaka, has a saying that he resorts to whenever he is asked a difficult question. He simply smiles and answers, *'Fuji san ni nobottara sazo tōku made mieṁashō.'* It means, I believe, that if one were to ascend Mount Fuji one could see far. The trouble is that, as in the case of so many problems, we can't climb the mountain."

"Wise Tanaka. But tell me, Trevor, what is your conception of a perfect crime?"

"I'm afraid it isn't precisely formulated; but I have a rough outline in my mind, and I'll give it to you as well as I can. First, though, let's go up to the library; we shall be more comfortable there, and it will give Tanaka a chance to clear the table. Bring your cigar, and come along."

Together the two men climbed the narrow staircase, the host leading. Dr. Trevor's house was a compact, brick building in the East Fifties, not far from Madison Avenue. It was one in a row of several that varied only in details

of decoration, and like the others it boasted bright brass railings, a smart white doorway with pillars at either side, and flower-boxes in the lower windows. Its picturesqueness was rather uncharacteristic of its owner, but its neatness was entirely like him. It was not a large house according to the standards of wealthy New York, but it was a perfectly appointed one, and considerably more spacious than it looked from the street, for the doctor had built on an addition that completely covered the plot which had once been the back-yard; and this new section, as well as housing the kitchen and servants' quarters below, held a laboratory and workroom two stories high. An industrial or research chemist might have coveted the equipment of that room; and the filing cases that completely lined the encircling gallery would have furnished any newspaper with a complete reference department. A door opened from the library into the laboratory, and the library itself came close to being the ideal chamber of every student. Wherever shelves could stand, they stood, running from floor to ceiling, the lower ones being closed cupboards. Only one bit of wall-space was visible, just above the colonial mantelpiece that framed a cheery fireplace. Books were the reason of the room, and books seemed to possess it utterly; but deep-seated chairs and low tables made it comfortable for human visitors.

Dr. Harrison Trevor's house was, in short, an ideal bachelor's establishment, and he had never been tempted to transform it into anything else. Women had small place in it; a maid spent only the morning and afternoon hours there, returning to her own home after the daily work was done. Tanaka and the cook, Kido, had their quarters in the new wing downstairs. Trevor's secretary, a young Englishman, who at the moment was taking a well-earned vacation in the country, slept on the top floor; and the doctor's own sleeping and dressing rooms were in the front of the house, on the same floor as the library. More than one male visitor had found reason to remark, "Old Trevor does well for himself."

The same idea flitted across Hare's mind as he puffed

at his host's excellent cigar and tasted the liqueur that Tanaka had placed on the table beside his chair. He, too, enjoyed the pleasures of bachelorhood, but he had never learned the knack of enjoying them quite so thoroughly. He would make a few improvements in the routine of his life; he could afford them.

"The perfect crime must, of course, be a murder." Trevor's voice broke the silence that had followed their entrance into the library.

Hare shifted his bulk a little and inquired, "Yes? Why?"

"Because it is, according to our accepted standards, the most reprehensible of all crimes and, therefore, according to my interests, the best. Human life is what we prize most and do our best to protect; to take human life with an art that eludes all detection is unquestionably the ideal criminal action. In it there is a degree of beauty possible in no other crime."

"Humph!" grunted Hare, "you make it sound pleasant."

"I am speaking at once as an amateur and as a professor of crime. You have heard surgeons talk of 'beautiful cases.' Well, that is my attitude precisely; and in my cases invariably, as in most of theirs, the patient dies."

"I see."

Trevor blinked, tugged at his eyeglass cord, and then continued. "The crime must be murder, and it must be murder of a particular kind, the purest kind. Now what is the 'purest' kind? Let us see. The *crime passionel* can be ruled out at once, for it is almost impossible that it should be perfect. Passion does not make for art; hot blood begets innumerable blunders. What about the murder for gain? William Palmer is a perfect example of that type of murderer. But men of his kind make murder a means, not an end in itself; they kill not for the sake of eliminating the victim but in order to profit by the victim's death. Palmer wanted Bladon's money, he wanted to avoid paying his debt to Bly. He wanted his wife's life insurance, he wanted his brother's life insurance, he needed Cook's money badly—so he killed them all. If he had possessed the cash he needed, if his horse, Nettle,

hadn't bolted and thrown his jockey in the Oaks, those people would probably have been allowed to live; and Palmer would have contented himself with doing away with a few of his troublesome illegitimate children. No, we can't look to murder for profit as the type that might produce our perfect crime."

The sharp-nosed doctor paused and held his cigar for a moment between his thin lips. Hare studied his face curiously; the man's complete lack of emotion in discussing such matters was not wholly pleasant, he reflected.

Trevor put down his cigar. "No, we can't look to the Palmers of this world. Now, how about political and religious murders? They can be counted out almost immediately, for the simple reason that the murderer in such cases is always convinced that he is either serving the public or serving God and, therefore, seldom makes any attempt to conceal his guilt. But there is another class to be considered—those who kill for the sheer joy of killing, those who are dominated by the blood-lust. Offhand you would think that their killing would be of the purest type. But as I have said before, the maniac invariably repeats himself, and his repetition leads to his discovery. And even more important is the consideration that the artist must possess the faculty of choice, and that the born killer has no choice. His actions are not willed by himself, they are compelled; whereas the perfect crime must be a work of art, not of necessity."

"You seem to have written off all the possibilities pretty well," remarked Hare.

The doctor shook his head quickly. "Not all. There is one type of murder left, and it is the kind we are looking for: the murder of elimination, the murder in which the sole and pure object is to remove the victim from the world, to get rid of a person whose continued existence is not desirable to the murderer."

"But that brings you back to your *crime passionel*, doesn't it? Practically all murders of jealousy, for example, are murders of elimination, aren't they?"

"In a sense, yes, but not in the purest sense. And, as

"I have said before, passion can never produce the perfect crime. It must be studied, carefully meditated, and performed in absolutely cold blood. Otherwise it is sure to be imperfect."

"You do go at this in a rather fish-blooded way," remarked the good listener as the doctor paused for a moment.

"Of course I do, and that is the only way the perfect crime could be committed. Now I can imagine a pure murder of elimination that would be ideal so far as motives and circumstances were concerned. Suppose you had spent fifteen years establishing a certain reading of a dubious passage in one of Pindar's odes."

"Ha, ha!" interrupted Hare jocosely. "Suppose I had?"

"And suppose," continued Dr. Harrison Trevor, not noticing the interruption, "that another scholar had managed to build up an argument which completely invalidated your interpretation. Suppose, further, that he communicated his proofs to you, and that he had as yet mentioned them to no one else. There you would have a perfect motive and a perfect set of circumstances; only the method of the murder would remain to be worked out."

Gregory Hare sat bolt upright. "Good God, man! What do you mean, 'the method of the murder'?"

The doctor blinked. "Why, don't you understand? You would have excellent reasons for eliminating your rival and thereby saving your own interpretation of the text from confutation; and no one, once your victim was dead and the proofs destroyed, could suspect that you had any such motive. You could work with perfect freedom, you could concentrate on two essentials: the method of the murder and, of course, the disposition of the body."

"The disposition of the body?" Hare seemed to echo the speaker's last words involuntarily.

"To be sure; that is a very important item, most important in fact. But I flatter myself," and here the doctor chuckled softly, "that I have done some very valuable research work along that line."

"You have, eh?" murmured Hare. "And what have you found out?"

"I'll tell you later," Trevor assured him, "and I don't think I would tell any other man alive, because it's really too simple and too dangerous. But at the moment I want to impress on you that the disposition of the body is perhaps the most important step of all in the commission of the perfect crime. The absence of a *corpus delicti* is curiously troublesome to the police. Harrington should really have managed to get rid of West's body, although it probably wouldn't have kept him from sitting in the electric chair two weeks ago. He was too careless."

Hare again sat up sharply and exclaimed, "Was he? Speaking of that, it was the Harrington case that I chiefly wanted to talk to you about to-night."

"Oh, was it? Well, we can get around to that in a minute. And, by the way, that came pretty close to being a murder of elimination, if you like; but the money element figured in it, big money, and gold is apt to have a fairly strong smell when it is mixed up with crime. Harrington's motive was easily traced, but his position made it impossible to touch him until we had our case absolutely water-tight."

"Water-tight, eh? That's what I want to hear about. You see I was abroad until last week, and didn't even know Harrington had been arrested until just before I sailed. The North African newspapers aren't so informative. I was particularly interested, you see, because I knew both men fairly well, and West's wife even better."

"Oh, yes, his wife, gorgeous woman. They were separated, and she's been in Europe for the last two and a half years."

"Yes, I know she has—most of the time."

"All the time. She hasn't been in the United States during that period."

"Hasn't she? Well, I last saw her at Monte Carlo, but that's not important at the moment. I want to hear how you tracked down Harrington."

Dr. Harrison Trevor smiled complacently, adjusted his

ve-glasses, and then launched forth in his characteristic
anner. "It was really simplicity itself. The only flaw
as that Harrington finally confessed. That rather an-
oyed me, for we didn't need a confession; the circum-
antial evidence was complete."

"Circumstantial?"

"Of course. You know as well as I do that most con-
ctions for murder are based on circumstantial evidence.
ne doesn't send out invitations for a killing."

"No, of course not. Sorry."

"Well, as you probably know, Ernest West, Wall Street
perator and multimillionaire (as the papers had it), was
ound shot through the heart one night a little more than
year ago. He had a shack down on Long Island, near
mithtown, that he used as a base for duck shooting and
shing. The only servant he kept there was an old house-
eeper, a local inhabitant; he liked to lead the simple
fe when he could. Never even used to take a chauffeur
own with him. The evening he was killed the house-
eeper was absent, spending the night with a sick daugh-
r of hers in Jamaica. She testified that West had sent
er off, saying that he could pick up a light supper and
reakfast for himself. She turned up the next morning,
nd nearly died of the shock. West was shot in what was
kind of gun room where he kept all his gear and a
w books—cosy sort of place and the best room in the
ouse. There was no sign of a struggle. He was sitting
umped in a big armchair. The bullet that killed him
as a .25 caliber. Furst, of the Homicide Bureau, called
e up as soon as the regulars failed to locate any scent,
nd I went down there immediately. West was an im-
ortant man, you know." The doctor tugged self-con-
iously at his black cord. "I went down there at once,
nd I discovered various things. First of all, the house
as isolated, and there was no one in the neighborhood
no could give any useful evidence whatsoever. The body
nd been discovered by a messenger boy with a telegram
about seven-thirty; medical examination indicated that
e murder had been committed about an hour before.

Inside the house I found only one item that I thought useful. After going over the dust and so forth which I swept up from the gun-room floor, I had several tiny thread-ends that had pretty obviously come from a tweed suit; and those threads could not be matched in West's wardrobe. But they might have been months old, so I didn't concentrate on them at first. Outside the house there was more to go on. The ground was damp, and two sets of footprints were visible: a man's and a woman's . . ."

"A woman's?" Hare was all attention now.

"Yes, the housekeeper's, of course."

"Oh, yes, the housekeeper's."

"Certainly. But it was difficult to identify them, for the reason that the man, apparently through nervousness, had walked up and down the lane leading to the road several times before finally leaving the scene of his crime; and he had trampled over almost every one of the woman's footprints, scarcely leaving one intact."

"That was odd, wasn't it?"

"Very, at first glance, but really simple enough when you think it over. The murderer had hurried out of the house after firing the fatal shot; then he hesitated. He was flurried and couldn't make up his mind as to his next step, even though he had an automobile waiting for him at the end of the lane. So he walked up and down for a few minutes, to calm his nerves and collect his ideas. It was a narrow lane, and the obliteration of the other tracks was at once accidental and inevitable."

"He had a car waiting?"

"Yes, a heavy touring car. Its tire marks were plain, as were those of the public hack that West had ordered for his housekeeper that afternoon. And there was one interesting feature about the marks. There was a big, hard blister on one of the shoes, and it left a perfectly defined indentation in the mud every time it came around."

"I see. And both sets of footprints ended at the same spot?"

"Naturally. The hack stopped for the woman just where the murderer later parked his car."

"Hum." Hare had now lighted a new cigar, and he puffed at it reflectively before asking, "And you are quite sure the woman did not get into the car with the man?"

Trevor stared at the speaker blankly and exclaimed, "You must be wool-gathering, Hare. The woman was the housekeeper, and she went off in a public hack at least two hours before the crime was committed. In any event, Harrington confirmed the correctness of all my deductions when he finally confessed." Dr. Harrison Trevor was obviously nettled.

"Oh, yes, of course he did; I'd forgotten. Sorry. Let's hear how you nabbed him."

For a moment the detective looked at his companion doubtfully, as though he feared the other might be baiting him; for Hare's questions had not been of the sort that his alert mind usually asked. He seemed to have something up his sleeve. But Trevor thrust his suspicions aside and returned to the pleasant task of describing his triumph.

"With the bullet, the footprints, the tire marks, and the threads, I had considerable to go on. All I had to do was to relate them unmistakably to one man, and I had my murderer. But the trail soon led into quarters where we had to move cautiously. With my material evidence in front of me, I set out to fasten upon some individual who might have had a motive for killing West. So far as anyone could say, he had no enemies; but on the other hand he had few friends. He believed in the maxim that he travels fastest who travels alone. However, he had nipped some men pretty badly in the Street; and it was upon his financial operations that I soon concentrated my attention. There, with the facilities for investigation at my command, I discovered some very interesting facts. During the three weeks prior to West's death the common stock of Elliott Light and Power had risen fifty-seven points; four days after he had been shot it had dropped back no less than sixty-three points. Investigation showed

that on the day West was murdered Harrington was short one hundred and thirty-odd thousand shares of that particular stock. He had been selling it short all the way up, and West had been buying all that was offered. Harrington's resources, great as they were, weren't equal to his rival's. He knew that unless he could break Elliott Common wide open he was a ruined man, and he took the one sure way to do it that he could think of. He eliminated West. It was murder for millions."

Trevor paused impressively; Hare did not say a word.

"That's about all there is to the story; the rest of it was routine sleuthing. One of my men found four tires, three in perfect condition, which had been taken from Harrington's touring car and replaced on the day following the murder. They had been put in a loft of the garage on Harrington's country place. Three perfect tires, mind you; and on the fourth there was a large, hard blister. Harrington's shoes fitted the footprints in West's lane, and the thread-ends matched the threads in one of Harrington's suits. And, to top it all off, after the man was arrested, we found a .25, pearl-handled revolver in his wall safe. One shot had been fired, and the weapon hadn't been cleaned since. Harrington's chauffeur testified that his master had taken out the big touring car alone on the afternoon of the murder; the man remembered the date because it had been his wife's birthday. It was all very simple, and even such elements of interest as it possessed were lessened by Harrington's confession. The press made much too much of a stir about my part in the affair." The doctor smiled deprecatingly. "It was really no mystery at all, and if the men involved had not been so rich and so prominent the case would have been virtually ignored. But we nailed him just in time; he was sailing for Europe the following week."

"What kind of a revolver did you say it was?" Hare asked the question so abruptly that Trevor started before answering.

"Why, it was a .25, pearl-handled and nickel-finished.

Rather a dainty weapon altogether; Harrington was a bit apologetic about owning such a toy."

"I should think he might have been. Was the handle slightly chipped on the right side?"

Trevor leaned forward suddenly. "Yes, it was. How the devil did you know?"

"Why it got chipped when Alice dropped it on a rock at Davos. The four of us were target-shooting back of the hotel."

"Alice!" exclaimed Trevor. "What Alice? And what do you mean by the four of you?"

Hare answered quietly, "Alice West, my dear fellow. You see, it was her gun. And the four of us were West, Alice, Harrington, and myself; we were all staying at the same hotel in Switzerland four years ago."

"Her gun?" The doctor was speaking excitedly now. "You mean she gave it to him?"

"I doubt it, much as she loved him," drawled Hare. "He probably took it away from her, too late."

"You're talking in riddles," snapped the detective. "What do you mean?"

"Simply that that little weapon helped to execute the wrong man," said Hare wearily.

"The wrong man!"

"Well, that's one way of putting it; but in this case I am very much afraid that the right 'man' was a woman."

Trevor's apparent excitement had vanished abruptly, and now he was as calm as a sphinx. "Tell me exactly what you mean," he demanded.

Hare put aside the butt of his cigar. "It all began back in Davos, four years ago. Harrington fell in love with Alice West, and she fell in love with him. West played dog in the manger: he wouldn't let his wife divorce him and he wouldn't divorce her. They separated, of course, but that didn't help Alice and Harrington towards getting married. I was on the inside of the affair from the first, you see; accidentally to begin with, and afterwards because they all made me their confidant in various degrees. West behaved like a swine, because he really didn't

love the woman any more. He simply had made up his mind that no other man was going to have her, legally at least. And he stuck to it—until she killed him."

"She killed him?" The great detective spoke softly.

"I'm as sure of it as though I had seen her do it. To begin with, it was her revolver that fired the shot, as you have proved to me. I've seen it a hundred times when we were firing at bottles and what not for fun. There was no reason for Harrington to borrow it; he had a nice little armory of his own, hadn't he?"

"Yes, we did find a couple of heavy service revolvers and an automatic."

"Exactly. He never would have used a toy like that in a thousand years; and besides he would never have committed a murder. He was too level-headed. Alice, on the other hand, is an extremely hysterical type; I've seen her go completely off her head with anger. Beautiful, Lord, yes! But dangerous, and in the last analysis a coward. She's proved that. I never did envy Harrington."

"But she was in Europe, man, when the murder was committed."

"She was not, Trevor. She was in Montreal that very month, to my certain knowledge, and Montreal isn't so far from Long Island. Harry Sands ran into her at the Ritz there; they were reminiscing about it at Monte Carlo the last time I saw her. She was in Europe before and after the murder, but she wasn't there when it happened. Anyway, that's not the whole story."

"Well, what is it?" Trevor's mouth was grim.

Hare's fingers were playing with a silver match box, and he hesitated a minute before answering. Then he spoke quickly and to the point.

"The rest of it is this. As I told you, Alice is hysterical, and during the past few years drink and dope haven't helped her any. Well, one night at Monte, just before I left, she went off the deep end. We had been talking about her husband's death, and I had been speculating as to who could have done it. Harrington hadn't been arrested then. And I'd been asking her, too, if she and

Harrington weren't going to get married soon. She dodged that question, obviously embarrassed. Then suddenly she burst out into a wild tirade against the dead man, called him every name under heaven, and finally dived into her evening bag and fished out a letter. It was addressed to her, and the post mark was more than a year old; it was almost broken at the creases from having been read over and over again. She shoved it at me, and insisted that I read it. It was from West, and it was a cruel letter if I've ever read one. It was the letter of a cat to a mouse, of a jailer to his prisoner: West had her where he wanted her, and he intended to keep her there. He didn't miss a trick when it came to rubbing it in. It was so bad that I didn't want to finish it, but she made me. When I gave it back to her her eyes were blazing; and she grabbed my hand and cried, 'What would you do to a man like that?' I hemmed and hawed for a minute, and she answered herself by exclaiming, 'Kill him! Kill him! Wouldn't you?' As calmly as I could I pointed out to her that someone had already done just that; and she burst into a fit of the wickedest laughter I've ever heard. Then she calmed down, powdered her nose, and said quietly, 'It's funny that you can shoot the heads off all the innocent bottles you like and no one says a word, but if you kill a human snake they hang you for it. And I don't want to hang, thank you very much.' "

Hare paused as though he were very tired, and then he added, "That's about all there was to it; it wasn't very nice. I left for Africa the next day, and I scarcely ever saw the papers there. But I hadn't any doubts as to who had bumped off Ernest West."

While the minute-hand on the mantel clock jumped three times there was silence in the book-lined room. Then Trevor spoke, and his voice was strained. "So you think I made a mistake?"

Hare looked him straight in the eye. "What do you think?"

The detective took refuge in another question. "Have you any theory as to what really happened?"

"It's hard to say exactly, but I'm sure she did it. Her reference to the bottles showed that she knew what weapon had been used; she must have done in a thousand bottles with it at various times. My guess is that she and Harrington went down to see West together, to see if they couldn't make him change his mind after all, and that they failed. Then she pulled out that little toy of hers. She always carried it around in her bag. I used to tell her it was a bad habit. She shot West before he could move; she was a better shot than Harrington, he could never have found the man's heart. Then they left the house and drove off in Harrington's car; but first of all he went back and thoughtfully trampled out every one of her footprints and, just to make sure he wasn't missing any, he walked over the housekeeper's as well. There were three sets of tracks there, Trevor, not two; I'll bet on that. Then Harrington took the gun away from her—if he hadn't taken it before—and drove her to wherever she wanted to go. She left him; she left him to stand the gaff if he was suspected, and it was like him to do what he did. He loved her if any man ever loved a woman; and she loved him in her own way, but it wasn't the best way in the world. She loved her own white neck considerably more." Hare smiled a wry smile. "She had forgotten that New York State doesn't go in for hanging. Altogether it is not a pretty tale. But Harrington, poor devil, wanted to save the woman even if she wasn't worth it. You see, to him she was."

"It's impossible!" Trevor snapped out the words as if despite himself.

"What is?"

"That I made a mistake."

"We all make mistakes, my dear fellow."

"I don't." The tight mouth was tighter than ever.

"Well, it's a shame, but what's done is done." Hare shrugged his shoulders.

Trevor looked at him with cold eyes. "Obviously you do not understand. My reputation does not permit of mistakes. I simply can't make them. That's all."

Hare mustered a genial smile; he was genuinely sorry that Trevor was so distressed and he sought to reassure him. "But your reputation isn't going to suffer. The facts won't come out. Alice West will be dead of dope inside of two years, if I'm any judge, and no one else knows."

"You do."

"Yes, I do; but we can forget about that."

Trevor nodded nervously. "Yes, we must. Do you understand, Hare, we *must*."

Hare studied him quizzically. "Don't worry, old chap, your reputation's safe with me; I'll keep my mouth shut."

Trevor nodded again, more nervously and more emphatically. "Yes, yes, I know you will, of course. I know you will."

"And how about a drink?" Hare swung himself out of his chair.

"On the table there. Help yourself. I'm going into the laboratory for a minute."

The doctor disappeared through the low door, and Hare busied himself with the decanters and the bottles in a preoccupied manner. He was sorry that Trevor was so upset; but what colossal egotism! Perhaps he should have held his tongue; nothing had been gained. He would never mention the subject again. It was a stiff drink of brandy that Hare finally poured himself, and he held it up to the light studying it, with his back to the laboratory door. But he never drank it; for he dropped the glass as he felt the lean fingers at his throat and the chloroform pad smothering his mouth and nostrils. He managed to say only the two words, "My God . . ."

About fifteen minutes later, Dr. Harrison Trevor peered cautiously over the banister of his own stairway. There was no one below, and he descended swiftly. In the kitchen Tanaka heard the front door slam, and almost immediately afterwards his master's voice calling him from the first-floor landing. Tanaka responded briskly.

"Mr. Hare has just left," said the doctor, "and he for-

got his cigarette case. Run after him; he may still be in sight."

Tanaka sped upon his errand. Yes, there on the corner was a tall man, obviously Hare *san;* but he was getting into a taxi. Tanaka ran, but before he was half way down the block Hare *san* had driven off. Tanaka returned to report failure.

"Too bad," said his master, who met him on the landing, "but it doesn't really matter. Telephone Mr. Hare's apartment and tell his man that Mr. Hare left his case here, and that he is not to worry about it. You can take it to him in the morning."

Tanaka went downstairs to obey orders; and his master was left to wonder at the coincidence of the man who looked like Hare getting into the taxi. The accidental evidence might prove useful, but it was quite unnecessary, quite unnecessary; he had no need of accidental aid. At the door of his library the detective paused and surveyed the scene with a critical eye: everything was in place, comfortably, conventionally, indisputably in place. There were no fragments of the broken tumbler on the floor; only a dark, wet spot on the carpet that was drying rapidly. Brandy and soda would leave no stain. Dr. Harrison Trevor smiled a chilly smile and then walked resolutely toward the laboratory where his task awaited him. Once the door had been locked behind him, his first act was to switch on the electric ventilator fan which carried off all obnoxious odors through a concealed flue. After that he worked on into the morning hours.

The disappearance of Mr. Gregory Hare, eminent criminal lawyer, within a week after his return from abroad, furnished the front pages of the newspapers with rather more than a nine days' wonder. It was Dr. Trevor who was the first to insist upon foul play; and it was Dr. Trevor who worked fervently upon the case, with all the assistance that the police could give him. Naturally he was deeply concerned, for Hare had been an intimate acquaintance, and he had been among the last to see the

man alive; but the body was never found, and there was no evidence to go on with. Tanaka repeated what he knew, reiterating the story of the taxi; and a patrolman on fixed post confirmed the Japanese's testimony. The tall gentleman had come from the direction of Dr. Trevor's house, and had driven off just as the servant had come running after him. All of which helped not at all. A certain "Limping" Louie, whom Hare, years before when he was District Attorney, had sent up for a long term, was dragged in by the police net; but he had a perfect alibi. The mystery remained a mystery.

Dr. Trevor and Inspector Furst were discussing the case one afternoon, long after it had been abandoned. Furst still toyed with the idea that it might not have been murder, but the doctor was positive.

"I'm absolutely sure of it, Furst, absolutely sure. Hare was killed."

"Well," said the Inspector, "if you are so sure, I'm inclined to agree. You've never made a mistake."

The tight-lipped doctor spread his hands in a deprecating gesture. "Not yet, Furst, not yet; but over-confidence is dangerous. Have a cigarette." And he held out a gold case.

From the point of view of the criminologist it is a great pity that some years later, when Dr. Harrison Trevor was preparing his memoirs for posthumous publication, death should have snatched the pen from his hand just as he had written the heading for a new chapter. For the chapter heading was: "The Perfect Crime."

"Now I wonder which one that would be?" pondered Furst when he saw the unfinished manuscript.

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